AN: Hello, Cheesy Servants! It's time for the pairing that I'm sure everyone dreams about: Simba/Haiba! You must think I've gone crazy. Well, I probably have – but I had a lot of ideas for this story, so I just decided to write it. It should be interesting, if not insanely ridiculous. Regardless of whether you'll find this dramatic or hilarious, I proudly present you with the first chapter of *Coming Out*!

Coming Out

Chapter One: Hanging Out

"Simba!"

Simba's eyes flickered open. He jolted slightly, looking around in a moment of brief confusion. The cub soon settled down, though, when he saw Nala lying beside him.

"Oh… Nala, it's just you," he sighed, feeling somewhat relieved.

Simba soon realised that he was lying against the trunk of a tall tree; he'd obviously fallen asleep while resting in the cool shade that it provided.

"Well, who else is it going to be?" Nala replied with a soft smile.

"That's not what I meant," Simba said. "I just…"

"Just what?" asked Nala. "Did you have a bad dream? You wake up with Scar lying beside you?" She giggled slightly.

Simba couldn't help but smile back. He loved Nala. He'd loved her ever since the moment they first met, which felt like quite a long time ago by now. They'd been through so much together… It only made their bond stronger. They felt perfect for each other. Soul mates, even.

Nothing would ever separate them. Nothing.

"I just had a kind of… weird dream," Simba admitted, looking aside awkwardly. If anything, he seemed embarrassed to talk about it.

"Weird dream?" Nala said, raising her eyebrows. "Well, we all have weird dreams once in a while." She snuggled up to him, as if trying to provide reassurance. "So it was like a… nightmare?"

Simba shook his head. "Nah," he said. "It was about… you and Haiba."

"*Haiba*?"

Simba was, of course, referring to their best friend: Haiba. A cub who could pretty much be defined as the epitome of cheesiness. Simba and Nala had met him a while back now in his own pride, the Grand Lands, and ever since they had been on many adventures together. They were most definitely a perfect team. A terrific trio.

"Why on earth would you be dreaming about Haiba?" Nala wondered. "Why would anyone *want* to dream about Haiba? He's sleazy and cheesy. Hey – that rhymes…"

"I don't know…" Simba placed a paw against his forehead, as if checking to see whether his temperature was normal or not. "It was one of those weird dreams. The two of you were fighting over who deserved to marry me…"

"Well, we have married each other… unofficially," Nala replied. "And we're already together, so that means *I* win! Right?"

"I'm not sure who won," Simba said. "You woke me up while you two were still fighting."

"You need to clear that head of yours, Simba," Nala said. "There's just way too much strange stuff going on inside."

"And how am I supposed to do that?" Simba questioned. "Whack myself over the head with a rock or something?"

"No," Nala said. "Maybe you could just… meditate or something."

"*Meditate*?" Simba repeated. "I'm no mystical creature, Nala. I'm not as kooky as some of the magical animals we've met.

And I'm *definitely* not like Hago."

Nala visibly flinched at the mention of Hago: her evil father who had tortured her in so many ways now. And that wasn't even because of his powers…

"I'm sorry," Simba said, noticing how she reacted to the mention of Hago's name. "I didn't mean to—"

"It's fine," Nala interrupted, patting him gently on the shoulder. "Don't worry about it."

"I hope I don't have a dream like that again," Simba said, changing the subject. "The last thing I want to see when I wake up is Haiba looming over me…"

"Did someone say my name?"

Simba and Nala both screamed as Haiba suddenly appeared in front of them.

Strangely enough, though, he was hanging upside down.

It took the two cubs a few seconds to realise that he was dangling from some vines tied to one of the tree branches. He grinned at them, in his usual charming way.

Neither of them could deny that Haiba was attractive. The neatly groomed brown fur and sparkling blue eyes certainly had an appealing quality to them. And the smile on his face was more than alluring, to say the least. They were surprised that no cub had ever expressed any interest in him…

Haiba doesn't look too bad today, Simba thought, although he soon found himself wondering why that comment popped into his head.

Nala was the first to speak to Haiba. "Haiba," she began, "why on earth are you dangling from that tree?"

"Well, since you two were busy having 'snuggly wuggly' time, I decided to try and fulfil one of my lifelong dreams," Haiba told

them.

"Which is?" asked Nala.

"To be a monkey for a day," Haiba said, prompting confused looks from both cubs. "Who doesn't want to swing from tree to tree and pick fleas out of their fur before eating them?"

"Oh, yeah," said Nala sarcastically, rolling her eyes. "My idea of a perfect day."

"Things didn't go to plan, though," Haiba said, glancing up at the vines he was suspended from. "I never even got to make my monkey noises. I guess I might as well do them now.*Ooh, ooh! Ah, ah!*"

Nala stared at Simba with wide eyes. "I think he's lost his mind," she said.

"Oh, well," Haiba said. "I tried. So… uh, do you think one of you guys could cut me down, by any chance? I think my brain is starting to pour out of my ears."

"Sure thing," Nala said, rising from her spot by the tree and walking over to Haiba. She severed the vines easily with a claw. Haiba dropped to the ground, grunting in slight discomfort.

"Ouch." Haiba pulled himself to his paws, brushing dust from his chest. "Thanks. The last thing I need is to die in an embarrassing way like that."

"Everything you do is embarrassing," Nala said. "By your standards, that was actually pretty tame."

"That makes sense," Haiba said. "Can I have a kiss to make me feel better?"

"No."

"Thanks." Haiba turned to Simba. "How about you, Simba, my cute little pretty? We should have a snuggle session sometime."

"Uh… love to," Simba lied. "When I'm dead."

"That can be arranged," Haiba said, unsheathing his claws and raking them softly across Simba's chest. He purred at him, adding in a wink for romantic effect.

Simba just stood there.

For a moment – a brief millisecond – the cub felt a slight sensation, deep down in the pit of his stomach. If it had lasted any longer, then he would have realised that it was an early sign of excitement.

But it passed him by, and he failed to give it further consideration.

"So, what are we doing today, huh?" Haiba asked. "Are we going to fight some bad guys and send them home with their tails between their legs? Or I could just hug them to death, you know."

"Am I the only one who thinks he could actually do that?" Nala asked.

"Of course I could," Haiba said. "Death by Haiba. It's the perfect way to go."

"I think I'd rather choose death by Simba," Nala retorted, glancing at her boyfriend.

"Yeah," Simba said. "And I'd choose death by Hai— Nala. Yeah. Nala."

What the heck is wrong with me? he thought, slapping a paw against his cheek. *I need to get more sleep…*

"Or we could all just snuggle each other," Haiba suggested. "Yes. That's a good idea. Once we agree that we're all too old, we'll just snuggle each other to death! Death by all of us!"

"But then who's going to bury us?" Nala asked.

"Um… someone?" Haiba said with a shrug. "I don't know – that's not my problem."

There was a moment of silence between the three cubs.

"I don't think anything's going to happen today, anyway," Nala said. "It's been pretty quiet."

"Then we should just have fun in a normal way," Haiba said. "Like the other cubs."

"But the other cubs are losers," Nala responded. "Why would we want to be like them?"

"Look, I know the perfect thing that we can do," Haiba announced. "Something that'll get our hearts pumping with all that red gooey stuff."

"Oh, yeah?" asked Simba. "And what's that?"

Haiba poked Simba in the chest with a claw.

"*Tag!*"

AN: Not too much romance between Simba and Haiba yet – but it's early days, of course. There are still many more chapters to go in this odd story. Did you enjoy it, though? I hope so, otherwise I'm out of a job. Anyway, I'll see you next time!

AN: Well, you guys seem to like this odd little story so far. But will you be able to suffer through more gay cub romance? We'll find out.

Coming Out

Chapter Two: Running Out

Nala and Haiba bolted away from Simba as fast as they could, laughing as their little game began.

"Hey, that's cheating!" Simba complained, racing after the two, paws pounding the earth. "You didn't tell me we were playing!"

"That's what makes it fun!" Haiba's voice sounded very distant; they were already quite far away from Simba.

"Oh, yeah?" said Simba. "I'll show you fun!"

Simba quickened his pace, chasing his two friends across the vast fields of the Pride Lands. It was a lovely day: the sun was shining and the birds were singing, completing the happy atmosphere.

The cub couldn't deny that he was enjoying himself. It wasn't often that he had a day where he could just play around with Nala and Haiba. Most of the time, they were too busy trying to stop ravenous villains from taking over the Pride Lands.

Today, however, was different. It was just… peaceful. For once, Simba felt like he was experiencing a normal childhood. And that was very satisfying indeed.

Simba darted down a steep hill, trying his best not to lose his footing and fall flat on his face. His good agility prevented this, however. For a cub who wasn't muscle-bound or built particularly well, he certainly knew his moves.

He raced along the waterhole, where most of the other Pride Lands cubs – or boring bullies, as he liked to call them – were relaxing. He ended up pushing past a few of them, earning

some angry stares and shouts in the process.

"Hey – watch it, loser!"

"What's the big idea?"

"You pompous prince!"

Simba ignored them, leaping over a low log as he continued to chase after Nala and Haiba. They disappeared over the top of another hill, causing the cub to go even faster.

He knew that they were heading in the direction of the Outlands; a perfect place for an animal to lose themselves in the rocky twists and turns. Simba wouldn't stand a chance of catching them if they managed to get there!

Simba cleared the hill in three quick hops, making the mistake of jumping too far and sailing over the top. He slid down the other side, bumping and bouncing along the way.

"*Ah! Oof! Eek!*"

The cub rolled onto his paws at the bottom, immediately continuing his chase of Nala and Haiba. He was catching up now. They were only a few feet in front of them. A little closer and he would be able to close in for the kill…

Simba eyed Haiba, deciding that he would be the one to go down first. After all, he was the one who had started the game; the cub wanted a little payback.

Tensing his muscles and bending his knees, Simba leapt at Haiba with a grin of triumph.

"*Gotcha!*"

Simba landed right on top of Haiba, sending the two of them crashing into the ground—

—and falling right through it.

"*Wah!*"

The two cubs cried in surprise as the ground gave way under their weight. They tumbled through the newfound hole, becoming disoriented in the darkness as they fell deep into the abyss.

Simba closed his eyes as tightly as he possibly could, knowing that his death was imminent. All those months of fighting bad guys, and it was a petty fall that finally managed to finish him off. How pathetic.

The cub fell down, down, down… into the blackness.

And he wasn't sure if it would ever end.

Simba's eyes flickered open.

The cub could make out a blue sky above him, but his vision felt blurry and unfocused. He was in a daze, unable to see properly.

The outline of another cub hovered over him, looking down with concern.

"*What's the matter, Simba?*" *The voice sounded angelic. "Did you have a bad dream?*"

Simba managed to nod.

"*Aw… you poor thing,*" *said the beautiful blur. "I think you need a kiss.*"

The outline suddenly moved towards Simba, finally coming into focus.

The cub was Haiba.

"*Come here, baby,*" *he said to Simba. "I'll make you feel better…*"

Haiba kissed him, sticking his tongue into his mouth.

Simba screamed.

Simba awoke with a jolt, wailing at the top of his voice.

"Whoa! What's up, Simba?"

Simba looked around the interior of the small cave he had woken up in. It was very cramped, with only the bare minimum of sunlight shining down from a tiny hole above. They had obviously fallen quite a distance…

Haiba was looming over the cub, staring at him with a concerned – and somewhat confused – expression.

Simba stared at Haiba, tempted to back away into the corner and stay as far away from him as possible. Especially after that dream… What the heck was up with him today? That was worse than one of his old Hago nightmares!

In the end, Simba just decided to stay there. That was probably for the best; he didn't want to freak Haiba out.

It took a long time for the cub to realise that he was staring into Haiba's eyes. The deep blue orbs were rather alluring, he had to admit. You could lose yourself in them for hours…

"Uh… Simba?" Haiba waved a paw in front of his face. "You okay?"

Simba shook his head, snapping out of his Haiba-induced trance. "Huh? Oh, yeah – I'm fine. Just had a… little nightmare, that's all."

"I see," Haiba said, flashing a cheesy smile at him.

Up close, Simba couldn't help but feel that Haiba looked very handsome. Especially with that smile… Simba was surprised that no females had asked him for a date yet.

"Well, maybe you should try dreaming about something nice for once," Haiba said. "Like me."

Simba glanced aside. "Yeah…"

Haiba stared upwards, eyeing the thin beam of sunlight shining

down on them. "Looks like a long way up to the top," he commented. "I guess we'll just have to wait here until someone rescues us."

"How do you know someone *will* rescue us?" Simba asked, doubtful that such a thing would occur.

"Uh… Nala, remember?" Haiba replied, raising an eyebrow at Simba. "I don't think she'd just leave you to die. Me, perhaps – but not you."

How could I forget about Nala? Simba thought, his eyes locked onto Haiba. *My head is so screwed up today…*

"Oh, yeah," Simba said. "Sorry. I feel a little dizzy. Must be the fall. It's messing with my head."

"That's okay," Haiba said, sitting down beside the cub. "I guess it gives us time to have a little chat."

"A chat?" said Simba. "About what?"

"Oh, I don't know," Haiba said with a shrug. "Stuff."

"Not much of a reward for catching you," Simba said. "That would've been a good game of tag if it wasn't for this."

"It happens," Haiba said. "Especially to us."

"Yeah…" Simba stared downwards. "Still, at least I'm trapped with you. It could be worse."

"I thought you'd be tearing your fur out," Haiba said. "I've been trapped with a few cute guys before, and I always ended up rubbing them the wrong way."

"What do you mean?" Simba asked. "You offended them?"

"Nah – I'm just not very good at paw rubs," Haiba said. "I'm more of a cuddling guy, myself."

Simba glanced down at his hind paws. "Well, you're not touching *my* paws."

"No?" Haiba grinned at him, placing a paw on his leg. "Can I touch your leg, then?"

"No."

Haiba changed the position of his paw.

"Your back?"

"No."

Haiba slid his paw around to Simba's front end.

"Your chest?"

And Simba realised that Haiba's paw was resting on his heart.

"Hmm…" Haiba raised his eyebrows, his grin widening.

Simba stared at Haiba, eyes wide with terror. His heart was thumping wildly in his chest: a mixture of raw fear and excitement. He'd felt like this ever since Haiba had started flirting with him.

It was a feeling of affection.

However, the cub didn't want to admit it. He was just blocking it out.

"Wow…" Haiba looked both impressed and surprised. "That is one thumping heart, Simba. Did you fall down a hole, or are you just happy to see me?"

"Uh… Well, I— Um…" Simba stammered, trying to think of an answer. It seemed that his mind had drawn a blank, though. Haiba was clouding his thoughts. He couldn't quite think straight.

Haiba narrowed his eyes, letting out a slight giggle. "Looks like that fall really scrambled your brain, huh?" He was staring right into the cub's auburn eyes.

"Y-yeah," Simba answered, nodding. He was trying to hide the fact that he was shaking. Nerves were getting the better of him.

"You know, that fall was pretty, uh… big. And scary. I just need to calm down, that's all."

A flicker of disappointment appeared in Haiba's eyes, yet he tried not to show it. "Oh…" He frowned, still not removing his paw from Simba's chest. "Well… it's to be expected, I guess. Even brave cubs like you get scared sometimes."

"Yeah," Simba admitted. "I get scared *all* the time."

"But more now?" Haiba asked.

"Kinda," Simba said. "I'm not really sure why. It's like there's something… different."

"You'll get over it," Haiba assured him. "You always do."

Haiba softly stroked the spot on Simba's chest. "You have a good heart, Simba," he said. "I can tell."

Simba's heart began to beat even faster. He could feel a warm, glowing feeling inside. The contact Haiba was making with his body… It was electrifying.

"Uh… thanks, I guess," Simba said. "You have a good heart, too."

Haiba's smile seemed to widen, as if noticing the change in his heart rate. He kept stroking the area on his chest.

"I think you need to relax," he told him, lost in each other's gaze.

"Yeah…" Simba nodded, as if lost in a trance. The Uchoyo Diamond had nothing on this…

Simba didn't know whether he had inhaled some fumes from the cave and was only hallucinating seeing Haiba stroking his chest affectionately – but he didn't care. He liked this very much.

"Guess I'd better help," Haiba said. "Here – lay on your back."

"My back?"

"Yep."

Simba did as he was told, lying down on his back. He wasn't quite sure of what Haiba was doing; however, he didn't complain. As far as he was concerned, a little bit of experimenting couldn't hurt… especially since he felt very confused right now. Maybe listening to Haiba would provide him with some answers…

Haiba gently stroked Simba down his whole chest, creating a soothing sensation that instantly relaxed the cub.

"Better?" Haiba asked his friend.

Simba managed a smile. "Yeah," he said. "I feel… calmer."

He rested his head on Haiba's chest, purring quietly. He'd never felt so relaxed before in his life; at least, not in a scary situation such as this.

Haiba was a calming influence. The pleasant caress of his paws actually made the cub sleepy. He would gladly fall into a slumber in Haiba's embrace… He had no problems with that.

Simba continued purring, nuzzling Haiba's chest.

After getting together with Nala, the cub had always viewed Haiba as his best friend. But was this kind of thing that best friends did? Perhaps it was something more…

Something deeper.

"Haiba?" Simba said, his eyelids growing heavier by the second.

"Yep?"

"This is just a… friend thing, right?" the cub asked.

"I don't know," Haiba replied, unable to disguise his grin. "You tell me."

Simba fell asleep at that moment, snoring lightly into Haiba's

chest.

He was too happy to care that he was now walking on a very dangerous path.

And it wasn't exactly going to end well.

AN: Hmm… That was quite a sweet moment, wasn't it? You can almost see Simba and Haiba as a functional couple. Of course, I won't make it that simple. Simba is still very confused. Haiba isn't making it easier, either. He just wants a snuggle… Will he get more of them? Find out next time!

AN: Greetings, fangirls! I'm here with more of this gay cub romance. Yes, that is the genre, by the way. No one has ever done that before. I'm so unique. Heh. Last time around, Simba and Haiba were trapped in a cave together, where they shared some very intimate moments… What could possibly happen next? Anything, of course!

Coming Out

Chapter Three: Getting Out

"Mmm… Haiba…"

Simba clutched Haiba's chest as he awoke from a dream. It wasn't too dissimilar to the one he'd had before where Haiba kissed him; the difference, however, was that he actually*enjoyed* it this time. It was very exciting…

The cub's eyes slowly opened, and he let out a quiet yawn. He sighed, realising that Haiba had fallen asleep, too. He didn't snore. His nose just twitched, which Simba found to be very sweet.

The cub watched as Haiba's chest slowly rose and fell. Inspired by Haiba's earlier actions, Simba decided to place a paw against the space where his heart was.

It was beating rather wildly, Simba could feel. As if Haiba was experiencing a very prominent feeling of excitement and happiness…

Simba registered it as affection. Perhaps even love…

He is kind of cute, Simba thought, watching him as he slept.

A frown slowly spread across the cub's face.

Oh, why am I thinking this? He covered his face with a paw, a sudden feeling of embarrassment settling into his body. *It's Haiba! He's a guy! I must have hit my head too hard when I landed on the ground…*

He stared at Haiba once more, unable to stop himself from smiling. Just the sight of him made Simba feel… happy.

It's unlike anything I've ever felt before, Simba thought, staring down at the ground as he struggled to come to terms with his feelings. *Not since…*

The cub's eyes widened in shock.

Not since I first met Nala.

Simba suddenly felt a churning – almost sickening – sensation in his stomach at the thought of Nala.

He could see her beautiful teal eyes staring right at him. Connecting with his soul. He and Nala… they were together. That was how it was meant to be. They were soul mates… weren't they?

This is just wrong… Simba thought, shaking his head. *But it feels so right.*

His head was swimming with confusion. He thought back to his earlier nightmare, where Nala and Haiba were arguing over who got to marry him. It was so vicious… as if their love for him was completely and utterly equal. No difference.

Visions of them clawing and slashing at each other invaded his mind… He couldn't get it out of his head.

"*I love him!*"

"*No* – I *love him!*"

"*I will die for Simba!*"

"*You don't even deserve him!*"

Simba couldn't even tell who was saying what – but their arguing words repeated on a loop, over and over again. He could see the blood flying everywhere… the ways in which they tore each other apart… how their throats were both slit wide open…

They both died. For him.

He never told Nala about that. He just mentioned the general synopsis… He didn't want her to know how passionately she and Haiba were fighting over him. She would have thought that he was insane!

Simba, feeling a combination of both happiness and dread, uttered a question. It was so quiet that no one would have been able to hear it.

"What if the dream comes true?"

He liked both Nala and Haiba. He couldn't help it. Whatever had happened today, Haiba obviously had a great effect on him. Today, he felt more of a connection with that flirtatious cub than ever before.

It was more than just simple likeability now… It was something much deeper.

And now only one question plagued Simba's mind.

But is it… love?

"Ow!"

Simba was snapped out of his thoughts as something cracked him over the head. It created a stinging sensation, like he had just been struck with a whip.

"What the…?"

Simba stared at a long, thick vine that was dangling in front of him.

"*Simba!*"

The cub's head snapped upwards. He recognised Nala's angelic voice instantly. It created a little flutter in his heart.

One of love.

And that only made Simba even more bemused.

"Nala?" cried Simba. "Is that you?"

"Yes!" Nala's voice reverberated through the cave. It was a relief for Simba to finally hear it. He thought that he would never get out of this cave… He would just end up trapped with Haiba. For ever.

Not that that was a bad thing, of course…

"Grab on to that vine, Simba!" Nala instructed. "We'll pull you up! Is Haiba down there, too?"

Simba glanced at Haiba, who was still sleeping. "Yeah, he's here."

"Are you injured?" Nala asked, sounding concerned.

"No," Simba said. "Just a little bit dirty – but we're fine."

The cub nudged Haiba in the stomach. He awoke instantly, looking around in momentary confusion. "Does someone want another cuddle?"

"We're getting out of here, Haiba," Simba explained, pulling him to his paws. "Come on."

"Oh, good," Haiba said. "I was beginning to miss open sunlight."

"I'll grab on to the vine," Simba told him, "and you hold on to me. Okay?"

Haiba grinned. "Like a dream," he replied.

"Right," said Simba. "Let's do this…"

"Oh, and Simba?"

"Yeah?"

Haiba kissed him on the cheek.

Simba just stared into Haiba's blue eyes, unable to believe what he had just done.

He didn't know what to say. That was surely an indication that Haiba thought of him as more than just a friend. That wasn't just a show of flirtation… That was a show of *love*.

Haiba simply winked at him.

Simba shook the moment from his head, turning to the vine. He bit down on it hard, expecting Haiba to grab on to him.

He did, gently clambering onto his back and wrapping his forelegs around Simba's shoulders.

Haiba's fur felt very silk and smooth; very pleasing to the touch. No wonder the cuddling they shared earlier was so enjoyable…

Nala's voiced sounded from outside. "You guys ready?"

"Yeah, we're ready!" Haiba called up.

"Okay!" Nala spoke to someone else. "Start pulling, Mom!"

A grunting noise could be heard from above, as Simba and Haiba were slowly lifted into the air.

They looked upwards, as the cave opening grew bigger and bigger. The evening sunlight shone down on their faces. They had obviously been inside for quite a few hours. Snuggling with Haiba really ate up time, it seemed.

Simba and Haiba were finally lifted onto the grass beside the hole. They rolled onto their backs, sighing in relief.

"Are you guys okay?"

Nala bounded over to the two, looking them over. They were both streaked with dust and dirt from the cave; Simba and Haiba were obviously in need of a bath.

"Yeah," Simba said, climbing to his paws. "I'm fine."

"Good to hear," said another voice.

Simba saw Sarafina walking over to them. Nala had obviously

decided to ask her mother for help. Being one of the best lionesses in the pride, she was more than capable of pulling two cubs out of a hole.

"We wouldn't want you to just rot in a hole," Sarafina told the two. "Just like I wouldn't want to waste my life at crazed jungle parties. That's not like me at all."

"Sure, Mom…" Nala said, looking at her awkwardly. "Whatever you say."

"Thanks, Sarafina," Haiba said, grinning up at her. "You certainly know how to…"

Haiba looked as though he was preparing to flirt with the lioness, but something held him back. Simba couldn't tell what it was at the time… He didn't know it had something to do with him.

"Know how to what?" Sarafina asked, confused.

"Rescue me," Haiba said, looking down at the ground. "Uh… yeah. Thanks."

"No problem, Haiba," Sarafina said. "Happy to help."

Simba stared into Nala's eyes. "Hi."

Nala hugged him, nuzzling his chest. "For a second there, I thought I'd lost you."

Simba pulled away from the hug, smiling at her. "I'm fine, Nala," he said. "Really."

"Yeah," Haiba said, standing by Simba's side. "He had me with him, anyway. I looked after him." He shot a sly grin at Simba.

Simba's stomach was in knots; he felt terribly nervous. Surely Haiba wouldn't go blabbing about what happened? He would have to clear that up with him at some point…

"I'm sure you did," Nala said. "I hope he didn't try to kiss you or anything like that."

"Nope," Simba said, a little quicker than he would have liked. "Nothing. We just talked."

"I need a bath," Haiba said, glancing in the direction of the waterhole. "Plus I need to book my next makeover appointment with my hornbill beautician. Manicure, pedicure, facial – the works."

Haiba wandered off, leaving a chuckling Sarafina.

"He is so sweet," she said, unable to hide the smile on her face. "I'd be smitten if he wasn't too young."

"You're not marrying him," Nala said bluntly. "The only animal Haiba is allowed to marry is himself. Right, Simba?"

Simba flashed Nala a faint smile, before turning away from her. "Yeah… right…"

The cub gave no indication that he was conflicted over his feelings for Haiba. In that cave, the things they had done together shocked him… He felt completely different around that cub now. His heart was always beating crazily. Butterflies were flying around in his stomach. It was a totally new feeling. Stronger than anything he'd ever felt before.

One thing was certain. He would have to talk to Haiba about it.

AN: Hmm… Simba really is confused now. It's like he loves both Nala and Haiba at the same time. That's a situation *no one* wants to be in. It's going to be tricky for that cub, eh? And how do we know that Haiba won't tell Nala what happened? Can Simba clear things up with him? We shall find out next time!

AN: This is going to be quite an interesting chapter. Simba is in quite the moral dilemma right now. Nala or Haiba? I'd be pretty damn torn myself on which one to choose! But will Simba make the right choice? *Is* there a right choice? You'll have to see for yourself…

Coming Out

Chapter Four: Talking It Out

Simba plunged his face into the cool, refreshing water.

The cold temperature provided an instant release from the intense heat of the sun. It was the middle of the summer in the Pride Lands, and that always meant the climate was going to be extremely hot. The cub would have hated to be stuck in the desert at this time of the year… He wouldn't last for very long.

Simba closed his eyes, allowing the water to wash away the dust from his body. He'd been stuck in that cave for quite a long time – and been through more confusing emotions and unusual experiences than he would have liked – so he just wanted to relax for a few moments. He needed the silence. It helped.

You have to talk to Haiba, he told himself. *Tonight.*

That much was obvious. Simba was more than just puzzled by his feelings for Haiba; it was upsetting him. He was torn between two different animals. Nala, the supposed love of his life; and then Haiba, his best friend. He liked them both.

He… *loved* them both.

Is it love? Simba wondered, lost in his thoughts as the water swirled around his face. *Or is it just lust? Maybe it's a phase… I'm growing up, after all. Perhaps all cubs like to experiment with males…*

Simba shook his head. *Nah. That's just stupid. This is something else…*

The thought of them both set his mind racing. His heart pounded when he thought of Nala. His heart pounded when he thought of Haiba. Exactly the same. No discrimination between the two. It was as if he loved them both equally.

But he could only choose one of them. And that was what made his chest ache.

It was a dilemma that he'd never heard of before. Being in love with two animals at the same time? That just sounded ridiculous. Nothing like this ever happened to anyone.

That is, except for him.

Why me? Simba asked himself. *Why me?*

It could have happened to anyone. Sarafina, Zazu, his father… No. It had to be him. The heroic cub who already had enough problems on his mind. Nothing was ever easy… His life always had to be so complicated.

I hope this will pass, Simba thought. *I don't want to be in love with them both. Nala is meant for me. Haiba… I just can't do it. It wouldn't ever work out. No matter how much you find yourself attracted to him… He'll probably just dump you after two days to be with a tree or something.*

That sounded like a simple enough reason for Simba not to be with Haiba. The cub seriously doubted that he could remain in a steady relationship for very long. They wouldn't even last a week, never mind an entire marriage.

If two males could even *get* married. Simba didn't know how the laws of the Pride Lands worked exactly. It could be complicated… and what would his parents think? They'd disown him on the spot! Not to mention exiling both him and Haiba! They'd be left with nothing.

No. Simba was being firm with himself. *No. You can't be with him. Ever.*

Suddenly, the cub was reminded that he was underwater. He emerged from the waterhole with the speed of a lightning bolt, gulping in a few mouthfuls of air. He was thinking so much that he had gone into a trance… He reminded himself never to do that again – and certainly not in the waterhole.

"Simba?"

Regaining his senses, Simba turned around to see Nala sat by the edge of the waterhole. She was dipping her hind legs into the water, watching him. "What are you doing?"

Simba paddled over to Nala, sticking his forepaws over the edge. "Just… washing," he told her. "I got pretty dirty in that cave."

"I see," Nala said. "It looked like you were drowning."

"Me? Drowning?" Simba laughed it off. "I don't think so."

"You were moving, so I guessed that you weren't," Nala said. "Otherwise I would have jumped right in to save you."

"Really?" asked Simba, raising his eyebrows.

"Of course I would," Nala nodded. "I love you, remember? I'd die for you."

Simba felt a stabbing sensation in his heart. Guilt.

"Uh… yeah," Simba said. "Me, too – I guess."

"I *guess*?" exclaimed Nala. She chuckled. "Are we supposed to be soul mates or not?"

"Sorry," Simba said. "I'm just feeling a little… scrambled at the moment. I'm not sure if I'm using the right words."

"I understand," Nala said, placing a paw against his forehead. "Doesn't look like you have a temperature. I guess you just need a good nap."

"Yeah…" Simba let out a deep sigh, feeling his stomach drop. "I

guess I do."

"Simba…" Nala shot him a concerned look. "Are you all right?"

"Of course I am," Simba replied, affecting a look of bemusement. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"I don't know…" Nala didn't look too sure. "You just seem a little… lost."

"Lost?" Simba said. "Well… I know where I am. There's nowhere else I'd rather be."

"You know you can talk to me about anything," Nala offered. "Are you sure there's nothing wrong?"

Simba nodded. "Uh-huh," he said. "*Very* sure."

"Okay, then." Nala gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. "Just checking."

"Thanks, Nala," Simba said, clambering out of the waterhole. "I think I'll probably take your advice on that nap…" He started walking away.

Nala padded after him. "I'll join you."

"Sounds good to me."

"No… Guys, stop it… You don't have to— No! No! Don't! *No!*"

Simba awoke from the nightmare with a start, panting heavily. He looked around the den, hoping that he hadn't woken anyone up by shouting in his sleep.

Luckily, that wasn't the case. Nala was still sleeping soundly, snuggled up next to Simba. She looked very peaceful.

Quite different from his nightmare.

This is getting ridiculous, Simba thought, placing a paw against the side of his head. *I keep having the same dream…*

Nala and Haiba. Fighting. Over him.

And there was still no clear winner. It always ended the same – with Nala and Haiba both finishing each other off at the same time. It was as if both of them deserved him… or neither of them did.

Or… maybe he didn't deserve *them*.

Simba smiled down at the sleeping Nala, just happy that she was okay. He smoothed her forehead lightly with a paw, before turning to examine the occupants of the den.

He counted them all – his parents, the lionesses, the cubs – only to find that Haiba was nowhere to be seen.

Typical. The one animal he was looking for, and he wasn't there.

Sighing, Simba clambered to his paws.

He didn't feel tired now – a few hours' sleep that evening had relaxed him enough – so he felt that it was time to finally talking things out with Haiba. It was the most opportune time, too. He didn't want anyone – and certainly not Nala – finding out about this. That was the whole point. He needed assured secrecy…

Simba padded quietly out of the den, keeping his wits about him. If anyone woke up, then there was no chance of him speaking with Haiba. If he could even find him, that is.

The cub walked out of the den, staring up at the night sky. The full moon was shining brightly, coupled with billions of stars. A perfect night.

But Simba wasn't in the mood for admiring the skyline.

A cool breeze whistled through the cub's legs as he approached Pride Rock. He could make out the shape of someone sitting on the edge, staring out into space.

It was Haiba.

Simba thought about calling out his name; however, he knew

that would arouse suspicion, so he decided against it.

The cub quietly made his way across the famous rock structure, silently sitting down beside Haiba.

"Hey," Simba greeted him, smiling.

Haiba grinned at him. "Beautiful night," he said. "Two cubs, in the moonlight… How romantic."

"What are you doing here?" Simba asked.

"Admiring the view," Haiba said, staring into his auburn eyes. "And the moon isn't so bad either."

Simba couldn't help but blush at that. He felt like a female with a petty crush… Was Haiba really that seductive?

Definitely.

"Uh… Haiba, I kinda… need to… talk to you about something," Simba told him.

"About what?" Haiba asked. "I'm getting better at the paw rubs. You want one – just ask."

"About us," Simba said. "About… what happened…"

"You mean our little romantic moment together?" Haiba said, snuggling up to Simba. He whispered alluringly in his ear. "It was pretty hot, wasn't it?"

"But why?" Simba asked. "I… I've never felt this way before. Not since I met Nala, anyway. It's so different."

"I know how you feel," Haiba said.

"Huh?"

"It's unlike anything else, right?" Haiba replied. "It's like this drippy… gooey feeling inside. My heart is going so fast that it feels like it's going to burst right out of my chest. I can't sleep. I can't even flirt…"

"You can't flirt?" Simba was surprised by that.

"Nope," Haiba said. "Unless it's with you. I tried with, like, three lionesses today – but my voice just caught in my throat."

"So we both have the same feeling," Simba concluded, his suspicions confirmed. "I guess we both have to be…"

They moved closer together, gazing deep into each other's eyes.

"You think we're…?"

Haiba trailed off, a dreamy expression forming on his face. His smile widened.

"Perhaps we're…"

Simba seemed to lose himself in Haiba's eyes, too.

They both uttered the next two words.

"*In love*?"

And they kissed.

It was passionate this time; more than the simple peck on the cheek that Haiba had given Simba earlier. Their chests pressed together, the two of them feeling every beat of each other's heart.

In that single, solitary moment, it was as if their two souls were fused together.

True love.

AN: Oh, wow… It's getting pretty hectic now, isn't it? Simba and Haiba have had their first kiss. Damn! This is so exciting! And things can only get even more romantically dramatic… Can the two keep their relationship a secret? That is the question…

AN: In the previous chapter, Simba and Haiba shared their first kiss together. Aw! Well, you can find it adorable – but you know it'll cause complications. This isn't your conventional romance, after all. Let's see how Simba handles this passionate show of affection…

Coming Out

Chapter Five: Pulling Out

Simba quickly pulled out of the kiss, panting heavily. He shuffled away from Haiba as quickly as possible, almost falling from the edge of Pride Rock in the process. He perched himself on the corner, avoiding the sight of Haiba.

"Wow…" they both said at the same time, sitting parallel to each other.

Their reactions were the same; the kiss was so surprising and unbelievable that they just couldn't comprehend it. Simba had never felt anything like this before in his life. Even his first kiss with Nala wasn't that good… and that had lasted longer.

"Simba?" The cub still didn't look at Haiba. But he could feel that his handsome blue eyes were staring right at him. "Simba… are you all right?"

Simba finally looked over his shoulder, staring uncertainly at the brown-furred cub.

He looked more attractive than ever. He felt like he was tingling all over from the contact they'd made. From head to toe, he felt… good. Refreshed.

And happy. *Very* happy.

"Yeah," Simba said, rising to his paws. Trying to take everything in. "Yeah, I'm fine."

"That was… something else, huh?" Haiba said, grinning widely at him. The blue-eyed cub looked just as happy as he did. But

obviously not as confused. Haiba was probably used to this kind of stuff all the time…

"Well… yeah," Simba said, a smile forming on his face. "But I… but I liked it."

"So did I," Haiba said, walking over to Simba. He nuzzled the side of his face, sighing in happiness. "The best kiss I've had in ages. Well, my best kiss *ever*, actually."

"Really?" Simba looked surprised. He was under the assumption that Haiba had kissed a million different things – not just animals – in his young life. After all, he flirted with everything… Was Simba really the best? "That sounds a little… weird."

"Weird… but good," Haiba said. He moved in for another kiss—

—only for Simba to back away.

"Uh, maybe… not right now, Haiba," Simba said. "Someone might find us."

"It doesn't matter," Haiba said. He approached the cub again; there was an almost desperate look in his eyes. "We can go into the Outlands – or the jungle, even. I'm sure we could do something… romantic in private."

Simba knew what Haiba was implying. His stomach tightened with fear. He wasn't entirely sure if he wanted to do this yet. He still needed to sort out his feelings. This was happening too quickly…

"I don't think so, Haiba," he said, being honest with him. "I'm still not sure about things yet."

"But we kissed," Haiba insisted. "That means we're… *together*, right?"

"I…" Simba hesitated, thinking for a moment. "I don't know, Haiba."

"Then why did you do it?" Haiba asked, looking confused.

Saddened, even.

"I have feelings for you, Haiba," Simba confessed. "But… I'm not sure if I can be with you."

"Why?" Haiba didn't understand.

"Well… think about Nala," he told him. "I'm… I'm with her. And… I love her, too. For all I know, this could just be some weird little thing I'm going through that only lasts a week. And I can't do this to Nala… It'd crush her."

"You can't stop love," Haiba said, gazing into his eyes. "Nala doesn't matter."

"You can't just say that," Simba snapped. "She's your friend. And my girlfriend. I was going to marry her!"

"But not anymore," Haiba retorted. "You can be with me now. There's no point in being with someone you're not happy with."

"I love her, too," Simba declared. "I'm not sure about this yet. I already told you that."

"But… but I've never felt like this before," Haiba said. He was being very persistent, which Simba found to be rather frustrating. "No one has ever loved me this much. You're something special, Simba. You make *me* feel special."

Simba had never heard such a passionate outburst from Haiba before. It was rather surprising. This was far beyond the charming flirts and cheesy grins he usually employed in trying to attract romantic attention. This was true affection. For him.

"Haiba… I'm not saying that I don't want to be with you," Simba said, placing a comforting paw on his shoulder. He could see that Haiba was shaking, staring down at the rocky ground. He looked… scared. Nervous. Apprehensive. "I just have to… think about it first. Okay?"

Haiba looked up, lost in Simba's auburn eyes again.

The cub realised by that point that Haiba was well and truly smitten with him. It was as if he had lost all control of rational thought. All he wanted was to be with him…

"Sure…" Haiba said quietly. "I understand."

Simba nuzzled the side of his face, offering him a warm smile. "Don't worry about it," he said. "Things will figure themselves out."

"I hope you're right," Haiba said. "I really do…"

Simba pecked him on the cheek. "I'll see you tomorrow," he told him. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight…"

Simba walked away from Haiba, padding in the direction of the den. He breathed a sigh of relief as he walked inside, tiptoeing to make sure that nobody woke up. He was petrified that someone might discover him and Haiba… If that happened, then his future would be looking very bleak indeed.

The cub spotted Nala lying to the side of the den.

He smiled at the sight of her. It was actually much easier to think about her than Haiba. Maybe that was a sign that he wasn't truly right for him… After all, Simba had never been filled with this much doubt when he fell in love with Nala. He always knew for certain that he had feelings for her…

Things could change, though.

"Simba?"

Simba let out a quiet gasp, resisting the urge to scream.

Nala was wide awake, staring right at him with curious eyes.

"Uh… Nala," Simba said, smiling warmly at her. "What are… what are you doing still up?"

Oh, I hope she doesn't know, Simba thought. *What if she*

followed me? I am so dead…

"I noticed you walking out of the den," Nala said. "I'm not a heavy sleeper. It woke me up."

"Well… I, uh… couldn't sleep properly," Simba lied. "So I just went out for a quick walk. I needed some time to think."

"Oh." Nala didn't seem to argue with that. "I guess that makes sense."

"So why didn't you follow me?" Simba blurted out, and then he reminded himself to keep his big mouth shut when he was supposed to.

"Because I trust you, of course," Nala replied. "It's not like you're going to go running off to kiss some handsome stranger." Her eyes narrowed in confusion. "Why would you think that I *don't* trust you?"

"I… I don't," Simba stammered. "It's just that…" He sighed. "I don't know. I was just asking."

"I'm worried about you, Simba," Nala confessed, as the cub lay beside her. "You don't look like yourself today."

"I'm fine," Simba assured her. "Really."

"I can tell when you're not fine, Simba," Nala said, a hard edge to her voice. "I've *always* known. Even before we were together. If you have to tell me something, then just spit it out."

Simba lost it at that point.

He glared at Nala, baring his teeth at her. "There is *nothing* wrong with me," he hissed. "I look fine. I feel fine. Now, shut up, and go to sleep."

Nala turned away from him, stung by his venomous words. Simba just scoffed, collapsing onto his side.

I don't care, he thought, ignoring the fact that Haiba had frustrated him, and not Nala. *She's been a nuisance all day*

today. It's about time someone put her in her place.

Satisfied that he'd made his point, the cub closed his eyes, and tried to get some sleep.

If he bothered to listen, he would have been able to hear the faint, quiet noise of a lioness cub crying in the darkness…

AN: Ooh… that chapter had a bitter quality to it. The whole trio are upset in some way now. What a night, eh? And it started off so well for Simba… He's definitely torn between the two. No commitments with Haiba have been made yet. This is interesting. It could go in any direction now…

AN: The previous chapter ended on a rather bitter note. I didn't like doing that to Nala… but you know that the plot controls me; I don't control the plot. I'd hate that if I wasn't in love with this idea. I'm sure you'll be interested to see what will become of Simba and Nala's relationship now.

Coming Out

Chapter Six: Falling Out

The dream was different that night.

Before, it had started off equally. Nala and Haiba were fighting each other. Screaming, clawing, biting. All for Simba. They both wanted to be his mate. Their love for him was fierce… and completely equal.

Or so he thought.

This time, however, Haiba seemed to be getting the upper hand.

He was on top of Nala, pinning her down. Baring his teeth and clawing at her skin, tearing the flesh away. The lioness cub was powerless to resist. She could only scream – *beg* – for mercy. She was calling Simba's name, hoping that he would come to her rescue.

He wanted to help. He really did. But he couldn't move. And besides… the sight of Haiba being brave and strong made him so excited. This was the cub who he wanted to be with. Not someone like Nala, who couldn't rise to the challenge… He wanted someone confident and empowered.

Haiba was that someone.

"*Simba! Please! Help me! I love you! No!*"

"No!"

Simba jolted awake, stricken with panic and fear. The cub sat up, staring straight ahead. He blinked a few times, adjusting his eyes as the harsh glare of the morning sun filtered into the den.

The cub calmed down, taking deep breaths. He tried to shake the memory of the bloodied Nala being torn apart from his head.

Nala…

Simba turned his head to stare at the space next to him. It was empty. Nala was nowhere to be seen.

The cub then remembered what he'd said to her the previous night.

"*There is nothing wrong with me. I look fine. I feel fine. Now, shut up, and go to sleep.*"

Simba grimaced, ashamed of himself.

How could he be so careless? Snapping at Nala like that… She didn't deserve this. All he'd succeeded in doing was taking out his own frustrations on her. Now he felt even dirtier than he did before. He was pushing away everyone he loved… Even Haiba looked disappointed when he told him that he wasn't sure whether he wanted to be in a relationship with him or not. Things had become so messed up…

I don't know what to do, Simba thought, burying his head in his

forepaws. *I don't know what to do…*

He was sick of this. Being unsure over who he really loved. Was it Nala, or was it Haiba? He didn't know. He couldn't decide. He didn't *want* to decide. Why couldn't everything just disappear? Why couldn't things just go back to normal? Just him and Nala… That was all he wanted.

You can't stop love, he told himself, afraid to admit it. *It'll just eat away at you if you don't do something about it.*

His words were laced with the truth. If he wasn't truly happy with Nala, then he was only insulting her by continuing with their relationship. It wasn't fair. The best thing to do would be to come clean and admit that he loved Haiba…

The mere thought of that made Simba's chest tighten with fear. To do that to Nala… It would destroy her. She loved Simba with all of her heart. If he left her, then there was no telling what she might do… She could hurt herself. Or worse…

I can't do it… Simba was adamant. *She wouldn't be able to cope.*

His feelings for Haiba were so passionate, though. He couldn't keep them locked away for ever.

I still love her… but I love Haiba more.

It seemed that he was finally facing up to that fact. Haiba obviously meant a lot more to him now than Nala did. He'd never felt this strongly for anyone before… Maybe Nala was just a crush. Your first love always felt like the best…

Maybe it's true, Simba said, finally coming to terms with it. *I don't love Nala as much as I thought I did. I was just being stupid.*

Then a thought popped into the cub's head.

You should be with him… You deserve it.

Simba didn't smile. He just accepted the truth.

Yes… I should be with Haiba.

Simba walked through a field, his eyes focused on the ground. He wasn't particularly interested in attracting attention to himself. Especially considering what he was about to do… He hoped that he wouldn't be disturbed.

Unfortunately for him, that wasn't the case.

"Hey."

Simba turned his head, almost flinching at the sight of Nala.

She was resting on a large rock. It looked as though she had been sleeping there the whole night… He felt a slight pang of guilt. He didn't mean to upset her like that. He could lose his temper sometimes. This was just so stressful…

"Uh… hey," Simba said, suddenly feeling quite awkward.

That was odd… He never usually felt awkward around Nala. He was always comfortable with talking to her.

Things can change, he told himself.

"You okay?" Simba thought that sounded like an appropriate enough question to ask.

Nala rolled onto her back, staring up at the sky. "Yeah," she said. "Needed a little time to cool down, but I'm fine now. How about you?"

Simba padded over to Nala, leaning against the rock. "I'm sorry about that," he told her. "I was beginning to wonder where you'd disappeared to."

"It's okay, Simba. Forget about it. And I wouldn't have gone anywhere," Nala said, turning to face him. "I think you'd trust me not to do that."

"Well, of course," Simba said. "But anything could have

happened. Hago or Death might've kidnapped you or something."

"They're both history," Nala said confidently. "I don't think they'll be coming back to bother us again."

"Good," Simba said. "You, uh… haven't seen Haiba anywhere, have you?"

"Haiba?" Nala thought for a moment. "Can't say I have. I saw your mom and dad walking past earlier – but apart from that, nothing. Why? You going for a date with him?"

"I just need to talk to him about something," Simba said. "It's kind of important."

"What is it?" Nala asked, curious. "You're not keeping secrets from me, are you?"

"No," Simba replied. "I want him to help me…" He thought for a moment, forming an excuse. "Dig a hole."

"Dig a hole?" Nala looked confused. "Why?"

"I, uh… found an Uchoyo Diamond," Simba lied.

"*What*?" Nala's eyes widened in shock. "Where? How?"

"It was… by the… bush," Simba said, neglecting to mention that there were thousands of bushes in the Pride Lands. "I have to bury it. You know how much trouble those things cause. I would've asked you – but I don't want you to fall under its spell or anything."

"Aw… that's so sweet of you," Nala said, smiling warmly at him. "It's probably better to ask Haiba. He's never affected by stuff like that. His mind is warped enough already."

"Exactly," Simba said, pointing at Nala with a claw. "So, you just stay here, and I'll be right back!"

"I think that's for the best," Nala agreed, lying on her back again. She let out a yawn, closing her eyes. "I probably… need a

nap… anyway…"

It wasn't long before Nala was snoring lightly, snoozing away.

Simba smiled. Now he knew that he wouldn't be disturbed.

"Bye, Nala."

Nala rolled over. "Mmm… bananas," she mumbled in her sleep.

Simba grinned and walked away. He did think about giving her a kiss before he left – but he just decided to forget about it.

Simba eventually spotted Haiba by the waterhole. He was curled up by the tree, where, oddly enough, Simba and Nala first met. He was staring out into space, wearing a noticeably glum expression. He looked rather sad.

The cub approached him. Haiba didn't seem to notice his presence. Simba just stared at him for a few moments. Summoning up the courage to speak.

And, finally, he did.

"Haiba?"

Haiba's head lifted upwards. He stared at Simba with hopeful eyes.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I need to talk to you."

AN: It seems that Simba has made his mind up. Will Haiba finally get together with him? We can only hope – or dread – that this is the case. I still feel absolutely terrible for Nala… I've become too attached to her in this. Damn!

AN: It seems that Simba is finally going to talk things out with Haiba. Will it all work out? Well, knowing this story, something troublesome will always pop up… but that makes it so much more interesting!

Coming Out

Chapter Seven: Making Out

Haiba rose to his paws, his head now level with Simba's. He was gazing intently into his eyes, as if staring right at his soul. "You want to… talk?"

Simba nodded, never breaking eye contact. The cub couldn't deny that his feelings for Haiba were now more frantic than ever. His heart was beating so hard that he felt like he was going to explode. That was how strong his love for him was…

And it *was* love. He couldn't deny that now. He lusted for Haiba… He needed him. More than anything – or anyone – else.

"Yeah…" Simba shuffled his paws nervously. "Do you mind if we go somewhere a little more… private?"

"I was going to suggest underwater," Haiba quipped, making Simba smile, "but I didn't think that would be very appropriate."

"Come on." Simba flicked his head in a northerly direction. "We'll go to the Outlands. No one will bother us there."

Haiba grinned, following after the cub as he led the way.

Simba's stomach was in knots as he headed in the direction of the Outlands. He wasn't scared about people finding out as much as he was scared of what Haiba would say. What if he didn't want to be in a relationship anymore? Had Simba just left him waiting for too long now? Was he far too late?

The cub didn't know… He had no choice now, though. It had to be done. Otherwise he would never know what they could achieve together… It could be something terrible.

Or something wonderful.

The atmosphere slowly began to turn darker and colder – no thanks to the mountainous rock structures and their resulting

shadows – as they reached the Outlands. It was no surprise to Simba. He'd been through this area more times than he could count. It didn't even seem scary anymore. Especially now that Scar and his slobbering hyenas were gone for good. Now it was just a quiet place to discuss things in private…

And privacy was exactly what the cub wanted.

"Okay," Simba, looking around cautiously as he came to stop beside a dead tree. A decaying leaf fluttered onto his head; he shook it off quickly. "I think we've gone far enough."

"So, what do you want?" Haiba asked, resting against the trunk of the tree. "You kinda seemed… confused last time."

"Yeah…" Simba scratched the back of his head. "You see, I wasn't exactly sure whether I was… ready or not. I mean, especially with Nala and everything… It's so hard."

"I get it…" If Haiba's heart was visible, then Simba would've been able to see it crack in two. "So you're not interested…"

"What?" Simba's eyes widened. "No!" He bounded over to him. "No, you don't understand! I just—"

"You what?" Haiba cut in.

"Haiba…" Simba stared him in the eyes. "I'm saying *yes*."

As soon as Simba said this, Haiba's eyes seemed to grow ten times brighter than they were before. A wide grin – one of joy and happiness – slowly spread across his face.

"You… you really mean it?" Haiba said, unable to hide his excitement. "You wanna… you want to—"

"I *do* want to be with you," Simba confessed. "More than anything. I… I think I love you."

"I *know* I love you," Haiba said, meaning every word of it. "With all of my heart."

Simba's heart melted.

"Okay," Simba said, smiling at him. "Now *I* know I love you."

The two cubs kissed. And, this time, it felt completely natural. All the uncertainty and confusion that had plagued Simba's body had now been washed away, replaced with nothing but love and desire for Haiba.

He felt happier than he ever had before. It was unlike anything else. This was what love truly felt like. He was sure of it.

They pulled away from the kiss. It hadn't lasted that long, but they both adored it, nonetheless. They held each other's forepaws, wide smiles on their faces.

"Wow…" Haiba stared down at the ground. "That was even better than before."

"And it felt right this time," Simba retorted. "I feel like I've made my mind up now. It's like everything's become… clear."

"I've never felt this way about anyone, Simba," Haiba admitted. "Sure, there were rocks and bushes and others – but you're just so… different. If Sarafina is a ten out of ten, then you're an eleven!"

Simba chuckled, unable to keep himself from blushing. "You really think that?"

"Of course," Haiba said, pulling Simba towards him so their noses were touching. "I wouldn't say it if I didn't mean it."

"You can say a lot of cheesy stuff sometimes," Simba said. "I don't know what's true and what's just… *you*."

"Believe it," Haiba said, pressing his forehead against the cub's. Simba felt the warmth of his body. It was a comforting presence. "I never realised how much you meant to me until now. I've been such a fool…"

"You're not a fool," Simba assured him. "I love you because of who you are."

"But… why don't you think it's wrong?" Haiba asked. "You said it yourself. Nala… You should be with her."

"If I'm not truly happy with Nala, then it's not fair to stay with her," Simba said. "She should be with someone who loves her with all their heart. And I'm not sure that I do anymore. I feel so much better when I'm with you. Happier. Safer. Everything…"

"But… how are you going to… tell her?" Haiba suddenly backed away from Simba. "What will she think of us? Think how she will react… She loves you."

"Yeah, but—"

"What if she does something terrible?" Haiba interjected. "What if she hurts herself, or…" He let out a groan of frustration. "I just don't want to think about it. She's my best friend. How can we do this to her?"

Simba placed both forepaws on Haiba's shoulders. "We don't *have* to do this to her," he told him. "What Nala doesn't know won't hurt her."

Haiba's eyes locked onto Simba's. "What? So you're saying that… we should have a secret relationship?"

Simba nodded, a serious look on his face. "Yes," he said. "Think about it. I can't break Nala's heart. I can't do it. She has to… she has to feel like she's happy. And if I'm not there for her, then I know that she *won't*."

"I understand…" Haiba said. "But it's dishonest."

"Lying is good," Simba said. "Sometimes. And we have to do this. What about my parents, too? They'd freak out if they knew I was with you! We'd both be exiled. I wouldn't have a kingdom to rule. Is that what you want?"

"Well, no. Of course not. But—"

"There's no other option," Simba said. "If this gets out, then it will destroy everything around us. We'll be left with no friends

or family."

"That makes sense…" Haiba shrugged. "I guess."

"So we keep it a secret," Simba said. "We'll spend as much time as possible with each other without drawing attention. And we can't get cuddly around Nala. It's just out of the question. Okay?"

"What about you and her?" Haiba questioned. "How's that going to work out?"

"It'll just be like it normally is," Simba explained. "I'm going to make sure that I look after Nala. I can't let anything happen to her. Not after all we've been through. She still means a lot to me…"

"She means a lot to me, too," Haiba agreed. "I don't want her to do anything drastic. Maybe… maybe this is for the best."

"Yeah," Simba said. "I think it is."

"Still…" Haiba smiled seductively at the cub, stroking his chest with a paw. "I think we still have some time to do other things… don't you?"

Simba grinned. "Me likey!"

And the two leapt on each other, making out.

It lasted for quite some time.

AN: Simba and Haiba are finally together. However, it's a secret relationship. What Nala doesn't know won't hurt her… Is that really the case? I know you guys will already be speculating as you finish reading this. It's such an interesting tale!

Coming Out

Chapter Eight: Looking Out

"Mangos…"

Nala rolled onto her side, inadvertently falling from the rock in the process. She jolted awake, jumping to her paws instantly.

She was used to the idea of being abruptly woken up by now; there was no telling what villain or monster might want to kill her next. Doing it while she slept would be pretty easy… Still, she wasn't a heavy sleeper, and that worked to her advantage.

Once she had ascertained that no one would be trying to attack or maim her, she began to calm down. The rational explanation soon occurred to her: she had simply fallen off the rock. Perhaps dozing in the grass would have been a better option… She did want a few hours of sleep, after all. Simba's hurtful words from the previous night had rendered her unable to rest. It had that kind of effect.

Nala took a deep breath, feeling wide awake now. She knew that she wouldn't be able to sleep again for quite some time; not until tonight, at least. She would have to find something else to do to pass the time…

The lioness cub padded through the field, heading in the direction of the waterhole. Surely Simba and Haiba would be there. Perhaps they could take a trip to the jungle and find something interesting to—

Wait.

Nala stopped, remembering that she had spoken with Simba earlier. He'd said that he was going to find Haiba so they could bury an Uchoyo Diamond together… They could be anywhere in the Pride Lands.

Nala sighed, feeling disheartened. Now where was she going to find them? They were the only two animals in the whole world that she could connect with properly. None of the other cubs had even half of the kindness and generosity necessary to become her friend.

Well, they have to be around here somewhere, Nala thought, scanning the area. She couldn't see any sign of them nearby. She doubted that Simba and Haiba would bury an Uchoyo Diamond by the waterhole; it was far too much of a public place. She didn't discard the theory that one of the other cubs might discover it either… That would be a disaster.

I guess I'll try the Outlands, she decided, thinking of one of the more secluded areas surrounding the kingdom. *No one's been near there since the hyenas were killed… You could hide anything in that place. Bodies, objects… secrets…*

Nala decided that the Outlands would be her best bet. Simba and Haiba would never go further than that. They only ever went to the jungle as a trio. That was when they were together… Happy.

The cub couldn't help but feel that some sort of wedge had been driven between them since yesterday. Ever since she'd rescued Simba from that cave, nothing had really been the same. He was becoming increasingly distant towards her – and snapping at her like he did last night certainly wasn't helping.

If only he would tell her what was wrong… It had to be something big if he was keeping it quiet from his future mate. If she were him, she would have confessed by now. They were supposed to trust each other with their secrets… That was the whole point of being a couple.

I'll just have to talk it out with him later, Nala thought, continuing on her journey.

The Outlands weren't too far away; she would be there within fifteen minutes. She just hoped that Simba and Haiba would be there, too… She didn't like the idea of being in a dirty, filthy pit of mud all on her own. Whether or not there were drooling hyenas or rapist lions.

"Nala?"

The cub looked upward upon hearing the voice. She wasn't

worried or anything; she knew who the speaker was.

"Mom?"

Sarafina treaded through the tall grass, smiling as she approached her daughter. "Honey, what are you doing out here all on your own?"

"I was taking a nap," Nala replied. "I was just going to find Simba and Haiba."

"I was going to ask you about them," Sarafina said. "I hope that they haven't left you out or anything."

"No," Nala said, shaking her head. "I told you. I was sleeping. I'm going to find them right now. Besides, I talked to Simba earlier. He had to take care of something."

"I see," Sarafina said. "Well… okay, then. Be careful. I'll see you at dinner."

"Okay," Nala said, watching as her mother headed back towards Pride Rock. "Bye!"

Nala turned around, continuing on her way. *I wonder what those two are doing…*

Simba and Haiba continued to kiss, their tongues dancing in each other's mouths.

Simba pulled away for breath, staring up at Haiba. A wide grin had been plastered on his face; it didn't look like it would be going away anytime soon. He hadn't felt this happy in a long while. It seemed that many months of life-threatening danger had finally turned out to be worth it…

He had found true love.

Haiba chuckled at him, pinning him playfully to the ground. He rested his head against the cub's chest, eliciting a purr from him.

Simba quite liked Haiba's aggressive show of affection… It was better than what Nala had done. This was so much more physical. It felt like it meant something.

"That was good," Haiba said, tenderly stroking Simba's chest. The cub continued to purr, closing his eyes in relaxation. He'd never felt so calm before. Haiba was such a soothing influence… "Best kiss of my life."

"Same here," Simba said. He licked Haiba across the cheek, looking like the happiest lion cub alive. "I should've done this ages ago…"

"I've wanted this for a long time," Haiba admitted, nuzzling the cub's chest. "You've always looked so… attractive, Simba. I can't resist."

Haiba kissed him again. Simba had never been this passionate with Nala. She just liked to kiss. That was it. But Haiba was pleasing him in ways he'd never even dreamed of. It was ten times better.

They rubbed noses, lost in each other's gaze. As far as Simba was concerned, this was about as perfect as things could get. Nothing could ruin this for them. Nothing.

"*Simba!*"

Simba and Haiba jumped up in shock when they heard the female voice.

"Oh, no." Haiba looked horrified.

"It's Nala." Simba got to his paws, backing away from Haiba.

"What the heck is she doing here?" Haiba asked, eyebrows raised. "I thought you said that we wouldn't be disturbed?"

"I didn't think she'd come," Simba said. "She must have woken up."

"Darn it," Haiba said. "And I was just about to give you a paw

rub…"

"That can wait until later," Simba said. "Just act cool. We'll be fine. It's not like she knows anything."

"What did you tell her?" Haiba said.

"That we were burying an Uchoyo Diamond," he replied quickly.

"*What?*"

"Hey, guys!"

Simba and Haiba nervously stood beside each other, smiling innocently as Nala walked over to them.

"Hey, Nala!" they both said.

"I had a feeling that you'd be around here," Nala said. "If you're going to hide an Uchoyo Diamond, I guess this would be the best place."

"Oh, yeah," Haiba said, nodding. He was doing his best to play along with Simba. "Those diamonds are nasty. Can't have any animals being brainwashed by their shiny evilness."

"Must've been hard work," Nala said, looking the two cubs over. "You guys look pretty dirty – and sweaty. A lot of digging, huh?"

"Um…" Simba exchanged a glance with Haiba. "Yeah. Took a while, but we did it!"

He neglected to mention that the dirt and sweat was due to the intense sessions of making out that they had been engaging in together… Nala could never know, though. Simba knew that he had to keep her happy. And if that meant his relationship with Haiba remaining a secret, then so be it.

"How are you, anyway?" Simba asked, placing a paw on Nala's shoulder. "You have a good nap?"

"Yeah," Nala said. "I even feel like I could take on a bad guy."

"I'd rather we didn't," Haiba said. "Our days have been much

more relaxed recently."

"Yeah," Simba agreed. "Relaxed is better."

He glanced aside, his gaze hardening.

But how long will it stay like that for? he wondered. *When will relaxed become… trouble?*

AN: Simba and Haiba managed to cover their tracks – or kisses – pretty quickly, didn't they? Nala is still none the wiser… They're hoping that it'll stay that why. But Simba said it himself: when will relaxed become trouble? We'll find out soon enough…

In other uninteresting news, this is officially my first fanfic to go past seven chapters. Weird, isn't it? I was so used to that format...

AN: Well, here's something which I think I've never done before – but everyone else has. What is that, you may ask? Just find out for yourself.

Coming Out

Chapter Nine: Calling Out

"Those cubs really hog this waterhole, don't they?" Haiba asked.

Simba, Nala and Haiba were sat beside the waterhole. It seemed that the area was busier than usual; there were plenty more cubs hanging around, some of them relaxing on the ground or splashing about in the water. They didn't know why the area had become so populated recently. Usually, the cubs were more interested in lazing about and gossiping about the most boring things in the world. It was as if everything had changed…

But for better – or worse?

"You know what they're like," Nala said. She was leant over the water, swishing it around with a paw. "Must be the hottest day of the year. They're usually more active around this time."

"You're probably right," Simba agreed, resting against the tree where he and Nala had first met. Despite the recent changes in his romantic relations, he still had fond memories of this place. Nala may not be the right mate for him, but she was still one of the most incredible animals he had ever encountered. Both in beauty and brains. She was perfect.

"Hopefully, they'll clear out of here by this evening," Haiba said, dipping his hind legs into the water. "I love a romantic date by the water."

"Who are you going on a romantic date with?" Nala asked. "Yourself?"

Simba tensed up. His heart began to thump in his chest – but it wasn't out of love. Surely Haiba wouldn't say anything… They had an agreement, right?

"We could *all* have a date," Haiba suggested, and Simba sighed in relief. It was obvious to him now that he was just playing the part of his usual charming self. The cub should have expected that; Haiba acting like he normally did would certainly keep their relationship a closely guarded secret. That was the way it should be.

"What do you mean, we could *all* have a date?" Nala retorted. "If you think I'm going to put my muzzle on your slimy little—"

"Nala, don't be so negative," Haiba interrupted, grinning at her. "We could do lots of great things together. Like a five-hour snuggle session!"

"I only snuggle with Simba," Nala said, looking over her shoulder to spot him resting by the tree. "Simba, please hug me or something. I don't want Haiba getting any ideas."

Simba hauled himself to his paws and strode over to Nala,

sitting beside her. "Haiba, don't get any ideas," he warned. "You know that Nala's not interested."

"I'm sure I could find someone else who is," Haiba replied, winking cheekily at Simba.

Simba scowled, rolling his eyes.

He wished that Haiba wouldn't drop subtle little hints like that. Sure, Nala would most likely never pick up on them – but you could never be too careful. She was smart. Smart enough to figure it out, that was for sure… They had to keep their commitment to each other as hidden as possible.

"A slug, perhaps," Nala said. "But then I doubt your romantic gaze would even please *that*."

Haiba chuckled. "I'm not that ugly," he said, affecting a look of mock offence. "Why do you hate me so much, anyway?"

"I don't hate you, Haiba," Nala said. "I just dislike you strongly." It was her turn to wink at him this time.

He smiled back.

"I do love you, Haiba," Nala admitted, "but just in a brotherly way. I'm sure Simba would say the same."

"Uh…" Simba's eyes flickered left and right. It was obvious that he was nervous confessing to *any* kind of love that related to Haiba. "Sure. As a brother. Whatever."

"You see?" Nala said to him. "Stop flirting with us and go flirt with someone else. There are tens of cubs here! Surely one of them will make out with you."

"You think I'd want to make out with some bratty little lioness?" Haiba asked. "That's not my style. It's about as outlandish as me flirting with Scar."

Simba shuddered. "Please don't put that image in my head."

"Okay, I see your point," Nala agreed. She glanced at the

waterhole, noticing that two rather bulky-looking cubs were teasing a smaller cub by dunking his head under the water. "They are pretty mean…"

"That's not very nice," Haiba said, following her gaze. "Someone should teach those two little rapscallions a lesson."

"'Rapscallions'?" said Simba, arching an eyebrow.

"Maybe I should've used a better word," Haiba said. "I'd describe myself as a loveable rapscallion."

"You're a loveable idiot," Nala said. "And just how do you think you're going to take on two bullies all by yourself?"

"We're supposed to be the heroes around here," Haiba proclaimed, "and I think two little ants like them are nothing compared to Hago or Death. Come on – let's show 'em who's boss!"

"Lead the way," Nala sighed, looking at Simba. "Why do I think this isn't going to end well?"

"I feel like that all the time," Simba said, brushing past her as he followed Haiba. He didn't want Haiba to end up getting hurt just because of two little bullies; that could seriously affect their snuggle time together – and there wouldn't be much of it to begin with. Not when you had to try and sustain a relationship with a female cub, too…

"Hey!" Haiba walked over to the two muscly cubs, who were still holding the tiny one under the water. "Why don't you pick on someone your own size?"

The two cubs turned around to face Haiba. The smaller cub emerged from the water, coughing and spluttering, shaking water from his fur like a wet dog. He almost looked ready to burst into tears.

"Well, well, well," said one of the cubs. "If it isn't Prince Cheesy and his dorky little friends."

"Shut up, Malka," Nala snapped, joining Haiba by his side. "If you keep bullying other cubs with your stupid brother then you're not going to stay in this kingdom for very long."

"Yeah," Simba chimed in. "As soon as I become the king, you're history."

He knew the cub; not personally, but enough to understand that he was a common bully around the waterhole. That and his brother Chumvi. A dismal duo if he had ever seen one. He'd like to teach the two a lesson one day…

"Like you'd ever be able to get rid of us," Chumvi retorted. "And even if you did banish us, me and Malka would just make our own pride. Then we'd kill you and take the kingdom all for ourselves."

The two brothers laughed, giving each other a high five with their paws. Simba, Nala and Haiba simply stared at them. Thoroughly unimpressed.

"Now that you've finished daydreaming," Haiba said, "maybe you'd like to get out of here before we teach you a lesson."

"Oh, yeah?"

Malka climbed out of the waterhole, getting right up in Haiba's face. "You gonna teach me a lesson, pipsqueak?"

"I eat guys like you for breakfast," Haiba replied. "You're a degenerate piece of filth."

Malka growled, shoving Haiba hard. He fell to the ground, grunting in pain as Malka leapt on top of him, digging his claws into his skin.

"How do you like that, you gay little freak?" he snarled.

"Get off of him!" Simba cried, lunging at Malka—

—only for Chumvi to stand in his way.

"Don't try anything," Chumvi said, jabbing his claws into

Simba's neck. The cub gagged, knowing that he was trapped. One small little movement and he could slit his throat. He didn't think the cub was beyond causing murder… He seemed the type who would grow up to become one. "I think you should teach *him* a lesson, Malka."

"I think you're right, Chumvi," Malka said, an evil glint in his eyes as he stared menacingly down at the trapped Haiba. "You should learn not to mess with us."

He bit down hard on Haiba's shoulder. He cried out in agony, trying to fight back. But Malka was much stronger than he was; he couldn't shift him. "Get off me!"

"No chance," Malka replied, removing his mouth from Haiba's shoulder. A deep, bloody bite mark was left in its place. "I'm having fun."

"You forgot about me," Nala said, before crashing right into Chumvi and knocking him to the ground. Simba was released from the threat of him slashing his throat. "Simba, get Haiba!"

Simba didn't need to be told that. He immediately jumped on top of Malka. The two of them rolled across the floor, slashing at each other with their claws. Malka managed to land a good few hits on Simba's chest, slicing it to pieces.

Simba's jaws clamped around one of Malka's legs. He roared in pain, collapsing onto his side.

"You're not hurting him," Simba said. "I won't let you."

Malka took another jump at Simba to try and pin him. He tried to hold the cub down, but he was fighting back furiously.

"He's just a gay little rat," Malka said. "Why do you even care?"

"Because I love him!"

AN: I've never really seen Simba and Nala take on some general bullies in my series. The cubs were always just boring

types, and I never went into much detail concerning them after their original appearance in *Friend Like Me*. Still, it was nice to write the characters of Chumvi and Malka. Nothing like their comic counterparts, of course – but what can you do?

And I've left you on a nasty cliffhanger! Oh, boy – Simba's in trouble!

AN: After a little break, I'm back with another chapter of everyone's favourite gay cub romance! Well, it's the *only* gay cub romance – but you can't say I'm not unique! Last time, the three cubs got caught up in a little fight with two bullies called Chumvi and Malka. Will they be able to fend them off?

Coming Out

Chapter Ten: Sneaking Out

The whole of the Pride Lands seemed to stop.

Malka and Chumvi simply stared at Simba, their mouths dropping open in unison.

Nala viewed him with confusion.

Haiba looked horrified.

Simba stared back at them.

All was silent.

"Uh…" Simba fumbled about, wishing he were somewhere else – like a volcano, or on top of a freezing mountain. Anywhere but here. "Uh… I, um—"

"You *love* him?" exclaimed Malka, backing away from Simba with wide eyes.

Simba found himself staring into Nala's eyes. It was as if she didn't know what to make of the situation.

"Y-yeah," Simba stammered, searching for quick lie. "In a brotherly way. That's how close I am to him. Haiba is a part of

my family."

He saw Nala breathe a sigh of relief, wiping her forehead with a paw.

"In a… brotherly way?" said Malka, slowly beginning to adjust to the idea.

"Yep," Simba confirmed, nodding. "He's as much a part of my family as Nala is. I love them both – but in different ways."

"What a dork," Chumvi said. "Do you love everyone, Simba?"

"Maybe he loves every*thing*," Malka quipped. "Do you make out with rocks, Simba? How about trees?"

Haiba glanced aside. "Well…"

"Just get out of here, you two," Nala said, frowning at them both. "I've had enough of you."

"We're not going until we've broken all your legs," Malka said, eyeing up Simba again. "I think we'll start with the dorky little love prince first."

"Let's get him, Malka," said Chumvi, a malevolent smile on his face as he sided with his brother. "I wanna watch him bend until he snaps."

While their backs were turned, Haiba leapt at Malka, sending him sliding across the ground. They came to a halt by the edge of the waterhole, right next to a few rocks.

"I'm losing my patience with you!" Malka growled. "You won't be mating with any more males by the time I'm finished with you!"

"Shut up," Haiba snapped—

—and he smashed Malka's face into a rock.

Chumvi gasped as his brother crumpled motionlessly to the ground, his eyes slamming shut. He rolled over – smearing a

line of blood across the ground in the process – and fell into the waterhole. The clean, refreshing liquid was tainted a sickly crimson colour. Chumvi sank underneath the water, vanishing from sight.

"Malka!" Chumvi cried, diving into the waterhole to rescue his brother.

Simba and Nala stared at Haiba in shock.

Haiba didn't understand. "What's wrong? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"What did you do that for, Haiba?" Nala asked, her eyes wide.

"He was going to kill me!" Haiba replied, pointing at the waterhole. "I had to do something!"

"What, like *smashing his head in with a rock*?" Nala retorted.

"I just did what I had to do," Haiba said. "It's not my problem. The guy's a creep, anyway. He deserved to be taught a lesson. Besides, when has a little bump on the head ever hurt anybody?"

Simba watched as Chumvi dragged Malka out of the waterhole. His face was smothered with blood from the impact. One of his eyes was swollen, looking an ugly purple colour. He seemed barely able to breathe. The cub was totally unconscious.

"*You monsters!*" Chumvi cried, staring at the three cubs in fury. "*You almost killed my brother! I'm going to rip you apart! If it's the last thing I do!*"

They merely watched in silence as Chumvi dragged his brother away; it was obvious that he wasn't going to try and fight them now. They were safe.

But for how long?

"We're dead," Nala said worriedly, looking at Simba. "It's only a matter of time before Chumvi tells his mother what's happened.

And then she'll tell your dad, and—"

"We just have to tell the truth," Simba interrupted. "They were the ones who were trying to attack us. It was self defence." He glanced down at the claw marks running across his chest. "It's not like we don't have any scars to show…"

"You almost killed him, though," Nala accused, jabbing a claw in Haiba's chest. "Why'd you have to do that, Haiba? This could've turned out a lot worse than it already is."

"I told you," Haiba said, frowning at her, "that it was kill or be killed. It's not like I'm going to go smashing animals' heads into rocks all the time! They deserved it, anyway!"

"Your actions have consequences, Haiba," Nala told him. "We haven't heard the end of this."

Simba sighed. "Come on," he said, walking away. "We'd better get back to Pride Rock."

Nala and Haiba followed him in silence. None of them felt like speaking after what had happened.

"Simba!"

Simba felt someone shaking him in his sleep. He stirred slightly. "Mmm… what?"

"Simba!"

He was being nudged harder now. His eyes snapped open, to find Haiba looking down on him. "Haiba? What are you doing here?"

He glanced outside. The moon was shining brightly in the sky. "Do you have any idea what time it is? You know we're supposed to—"

"Shh!" Haiba hissed, motioning for Simba to be silent. He gestured in the direction of Nala, who was snuggled up beside him. She was sleeping with a smile on her face. They hadn't

woken her up – yet.

Simba glanced at her, before returning his attention to Haiba. "What do you want?" he whispered.

"I was thinking that maybe we could… you know…" Haiba searched for the right words. "Sneak out."

"Sneak out?" Simba repeated. "What for?"

"Well… I thought that we could perhaps…" Haiba stroked his chest softly, smiling. "Perhaps we could do something… intimate. I think it'll… take our minds off of things."

"But what if Chumvi ambushes us?" Simba asked.

Neither Chumvi nor Malka had returned to Pride Rock after the fight. They were still out there… somewhere. Plotting their revenge most likely, Simba mused. He wouldn't put it past them. Chumvi had sworn vengeance. He could kill them at any given opportunity. They were going to have to be careful if they wanted to avoid his wrath…

"I'm sure we'll be fine," Haiba said. "They've probably chickened out. And besides… I think that we need to relax."

"But what if Nala wakes up?" Simba questioned.

That was a possibility; she was known for being quite a light sleeper. It had happened before… She'd noticed him leaving the den from the moment he'd taken one step away from her. What was to stop her from noticing again?

"We'll just be extra quiet this time," Haiba said. "Stay on your tiptoes."

"Is it really worth it?" Simba asked. "I mean, we could just wait until another time… Things are a little tricky right now."

Haiba quickly kissed Simba, sticking his tongue into his mouth. He removed it a few seconds later, grinning at him.

"Do you *really* want to wait?" he asked.

Simba's heart was racing wildly. "No," he said. "Let's go."

AN: Simba can't resist a little bit of Haiba lovin' – but could you? I doubt it. Ooh – that little moment with Haiba and Malka was pretty nasty. That cheesy cub seems to have a penchant for hurting animals with rocks… It stopped him, though. Will Chumvi take revenge? We'll have to wait and see…

AN: Malka got a pretty severe beating last time. Will his brother take revenge? Perhaps. Perhaps not…

Coming Out

Chapter Eleven: Walking Out

Simba and Haiba carefully slipped out of the den, staying on their tiptoes so that nobody would hear them. The den was eerily quiet; one little movement and the whole pride could wake up! And public humiliation – the whole pride discovering that they were gay lovers sneaking out for a snuggle – wasn't really something that they wanted. Especially if Nala found out… That was the worst thing of all.

They were silent as they left the den, making their way down the famed stone structure that was Pride Rock. They hardly dared to even look at each other; they were that nervous. Anything could happen at any moment…

Simba never thought that this kind of relationship could be so tense. It was setting his nerves on fire; not only was he trying to spend time – romantic time – with Haiba, but he was also trying to keep his relationship with Nala afloat. She couldn't ever find out about this… She deserved to feel loved. If he wasn't there for her, then who would be?

Once we're out of the Pride Lands, we'll be fine, Simba thought. *As long as we're silent, no one will ever know—*

"Simba."

Simba stopped immediately, heart pounding in his chest as Haiba's voice sounded. His toes clenched, claws digging into the soft earth. Why on earth did Haiba have to speak? And now, of all times? Why couldn't he just wait? Simba couldn't stand this anymore… It was driving him insane.

"What is it, Haiba?" Simba whispered. He stayed in place. Even though he was speaking as quietly as possible, his voice felt as though it had been amplified so it sounded like he was roaring out at the entire savannah.

"Where are we going?" Haiba asked.

Simba thought for a moment, thinking things over. "The jungle," he said, after a short period of silence. "The Outlands is too risky. Anything could happen."

"But the jungle… That's about an hour away," Haiba argued. "What if Nala wakes up and get suspicious?"

"Then we'll just lie," Simba said. "Say that… err, I don't know, Shocker kidnapped us or something. That's plausible. It could happen."

"You seem to have a taste for lying," Haiba muttered as he continued along. "It's starting to worry me."

"Hey – do you want to get caught or not?" Simba snapped. "I told you that we're going to have to lie if we want everyone to stay happy. This can't work if we just tell the truth. We'd be outcasts, Haiba. Banished."

"Yeah… I know," Haiba said, his head hanging low. "Sorry…"

"It's okay," Simba said. "I know it's frustrating. But we have no other choice… It's this or nothing."

"At least we have some time to ourselves now," Haiba said, looking on the bright side of things. "I'm sure an hour or two will please us both…" A sly grin spread across his face. "I might know a few new kissing tricks, too."

Simba couldn't help but smile along with him. "I think I'd like that."

"Tama?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you still up?"

"No."

Tojo frowned at Tama, who was lying in a vine hammock stretched out between two trees. She had her eyes closed, obviously in an attempt to try and get some sleep.

"Come on," Tojo said, leaning over the side of hammock and prodding her in the side. "I know you're awake."

Tama opened one eye, staring at him. "You're trying my patience, Tojo," she said. "Unless you're here to give me a paw massage, I'm not interested. I need my beauty rest…"

Tojo frowned, grabbing one of her hind paws and beginning to massage it. "Will you listen to me *now*?"

Tama rolled her eyes and sighed. "Fine," she huffed. "What is it?"

"I can't sleep," Tojo confessed. "I keep hearing… noises."

"It's called nature," Tama retorted. "I know you're a bit of a light sleeper – but surely it takes more than that to keep you up at night."

"Then why aren't *you* sleeping?" Tojo asked.

Tama's eyes snapped open at that point. "I can't sleep," she admitted. "I keep hearing… noises."

"You really amaze me sometimes," Tojo said. "I wish you'd told me that first."

"I wanted the paw massage," Tama replied with a sly smile.

"You have to provide for your wife, right?"

"But we're not married—"

"Keep massaging," she interrupted.

"I'm worried about these noises," Tojo said. "It's like a… rustling in the bushes. I'm expecting monsters to show up and kill us any minute now."

"What monsters?" Tama asked. "It's probably just a snake or something. Nothing too serious."

"A *snake*?" Tojo squeaked, his eyes widening. "But he'll kill us!"

"There are worse things," Tama said. "Like… Anklebiters."

"Anklebiters?" said Tojo.

"Yep," Tama said. "They bite your paws and don't let go. You have no idea how nasty those little creeps are. You'll be left with no legs by the end of the week."

"Well, I'm pretty sure that your paws would repel them," Tojo said.

"Thanks, Tojo," Tama said. "Must be how clean I am. Those annual baths really do spruce me up."

"I was thinking of quite the opposite, actually," Tojo replied.

"Don't be so insulting," Tama snapped. "Aren't you supposed to love and care for your mate? I know I do."

"I probably need more than a few kisses," Tojo mumbled. "Especially with all these scary noises."

Tama listened out. "They can't be that scary," she said. "In fact, it doesn't sound that scary at all. Sounds like… two cubs kissing in the bushes."

"Two cubs kissing in the bushes?" Tojo laughed. "Oh, Tama, that's just… quite plausible, actually. You think someone's out for snuggle time?"

"Well, the jungle is a romantic place," Tama said. "I mean, just look at us two. There's nothing stopping anyone else from having a nice long snuggle session… We've certainly had a few since we started living here."

"Hmm… my curiosity is piqued," Tojo told her. "Since we can't sleep, why don't we go and have a look?"

"Ooh, Tojo – your adventurous side is showing," Tama said with a grin. "I like that."

"Then let's do it," Tojo said. "I want to see who this romantic couple is – if our hunch is correct, of course."

"Sure," Tama shrugged. "Why not? But, uh… do you think you could finish the massage first?"

Simba and Haiba were snuggled up to each other, having been kissing for quite some time in the bushes.

"That was our best yet," Simba said, smiling at him. "Those new tricks were quite… exciting, I have to admit."

Haiba chuckled. "I know my Grand Lands tricks," he said. "Some of them are more intimate than others…"

"If only we could be alone more often," Simba said. "Things are a lot more difficult than I thought."

"Ah, well," Haiba said, pulling Simba towards him. He stroked the top of his head softly. "At least no one will find us here… We're completely safe."

"Got time for one more kiss?" Simba asked.

"You bet," Haiba said, moving towards the cub and slipping his tongue into his mouth.

"Sounds like it's coming from over here," Tama said, brushing aside a low branch as she and Tojo walked through the jungle. "Whoever those two sneaky lovebirds are, they're about to be

found out…"

The ground began to slope upwards as the two cubs continued walking. They eventually reached the edge of a clearing, which was almost entirely composed of a small cluster of bushes.

But that wasn't what drew their attention.

What *did* was the fact that there were two cubs making out in the small space, looking like the most passionate of lovers.

It didn't take long for Tama and Tojo to realise who they were.

Tama's eyes widened in shock. "*No way*…"

Tojo quickly covered Tama's mouth with a paw. His own mouth had dropped open, utterly stunned.

Simba and Haiba were completely unaware, of course. Their eyes were closed, deeply lost in the moment. They had no idea that Tama and Tojo now knew their secret.

That they were together.

Tama and Tojo stared at each other, unsure of what to say or do.

"I think we should go," Tojo whispered.

Tama quickly nodded. "Yeah."

And they both ran off.

Simba heard a slight rustling sound as he kissed Haiba. The cub pulled away from the kiss, looking over his shoulder.

Haiba stared at him. "What was it?"

Simba narrowed his eyes. "Thought I heard something…"

"Heard something?" said Haiba. "Like what?"

Simba thought for a moment, and then shook his head. "Never mind," he said, before continuing to kiss his boyfriend.

AN: Hmm… Chumvi *didn't* take revenge. It's Tama and Tojo who found out about Simba and Haiba's little secret… What a twist! Things just keep getting worse and worse… It's all downhill from here. This is getting serious.

AN: We had a pretty shocking chapter last time. Tama and Tojo know about Simba and Haiba! Oh, no! This means trouble. *Big* trouble. It's so exciting!

Coming Out

Chapter Twelve: Found Out

Simba and Haiba were thankful that they hadn't been disturbed on their way out of the jungle. The last thing they wanted now – at this crucial moment – was for someone to spot them and ask what they were doing. The sight of two male cubs standing close to each other in a secluded area wasn't exactly normal… It would arouse suspicion.

The cub found it hard to remain natural when he was around Haiba. Especially since they were trying to keep their relationship with each other a secret. It felt like he was trapped. Imprisoned. Unable to express his true feelings to others. No one could ever know about this… The consequences would be dire.

He felt like he wanted to get it off his chest, though. Wasn't there anyone else who he could confess his secret to? Usually, he would go to Nala to tell her something secret… However, that was – of course – completely out of the question. If there was one animal he could pick who should never know about him and Haiba, then it would be her.

He loved Nala just as much as Haiba… Well, almost as much as him. She was an important part of his life; he didn't want to lose her. Things wouldn't be the same anymore. His life would feel incomplete. Even with Haiba there. He couldn't explain it, but… he needed Nala.

The cub felt a deep, aching pain in his chest as he walked through the fields of the Pride Lands with Haiba. He couldn't bear the situation anymore; it was killing him. Something had to be done about it sooner or later…

"Almost there," Haiba said, smiling at the cub. He glanced at Pride Rock, which was easily visible in the distance – even though it was dark. "And before dawn, too. We're getting pretty good at this 'sneaking out' business, eh?"

"Yeah…" Simba said, although he sounded quite distant, as if in a trance. He was quite clearly lost in his own thoughts. "Sure."

"Uh… Simba?" It didn't take Haiba long to notice the faraway expression on his face; he knew him well. "You okay?"

"Yep," Simba replied quickly. He didn't want Haiba thinking that he was having second thoughts or anything; that could mess things up even further. "I'm just… thinking."

"Thinking?" said Haiba. "About what?"

"About… mangos," Simba lied.

"What?"

"They're pretty this time of season, aren't they?" Simba asked. "And juicy. Maybe we should try a few sometime."

"Err… right," Haiba said, raising an eyebrow at the cub, as if doubting his sanity. He decided to change the subject. "I hope Nala hasn't woken up."

That only made Simba feel even worse. The cub resisted the urge to wince; the mere thought actually caused him physical pain.

"Sh-she won't wake up," the cub stammered. "We were pretty quiet; we stood on our tiptoes and everything."

"And we didn't make out until we got to the jungle either," Haiba said. "Can't believe I managed to resist you for that

long." He shot him a cheesy grin.

Simba couldn't help but smile. Haiba really did love him. It was heartwarming, to say the least. Instead of plants, rocks and rivers, now all of his flirts were directed at him. It made Simba feel as though he were truly special.

"It was pretty good," Simba told him. "I don't know when we'll be able to do it again, though…"

"We'll find time for it," Haiba assured him. "There's always a way. Even with our current… predicament."

"Yeah," Simba agreed. "You're probably right."

He wanted to wait a little while, though. Things were getting very awkward for the cub. Every time he looked at Nala, he couldn't help but feel an enormous amount of guilt. How could he do this to her? It was as if he had torn her heart clean from her chest, thrown it to the ground and then stomped on it until only a splatter of gore remained.

Maybe things will get better… he thought optimistically. He then frowned. *Or worse.*

The two cubs eventually reached Pride Rock. As they clambered their way back to the den, they couldn't help but look up at the sky. It would still be a couple of hours before the sun began to rise; they had managed their time well. This time, their secret escape had actually been efficient…

Simba and Haiba stood outside the den entrance. "I guess that's it, then," Haiba said, smiling at his boyfriend. "For tonight, anyway."

"Yeah." Simba gave him a quick peck on the cheek. "Goodnight, Haiba."

Haiba gave the cub a proper kiss on the muzzle. He beamed at him. "Goodnight, Simba."

The two cubs headed into the den, walking off in opposite

directions.

It was as if they had never left.

Simba found Nala lying in the corner, still asleep.

He breathed a sigh of relief. She hadn't woken up. That was his biggest worry.

Thankful that nothing serious had happened, Simba snuggled up next to Nala, breathing in the flowery scent of her fur. He loved that smell.

The cub couldn't help but smile as he drifted off into sleep, comforted by Nala's presence.

It provided a momentary alleviation to the problems of his relationship with Haiba.

"I don't believe it!"

Tama was pacing back and forth, her eyes wide with shock. "I don't believe it! I mean, this is just… just… *Wow!*"

Tojo watched her as she tried to form a proper sentence. However, it seemed that she was far too surprised to do that. "It is pretty strange, I have to admit."

Tama grabbed Tojo by the shoulders. "'Strange'? '*Strange*'? It's more than just strange, Tojo. It's absolutely *tragic*!"

"Tragic?" said Tojo. "Well, Simba and Haiba were kissing… Maybe it's just a phase."

"I don't think so," Tama said, shaking her head. "I think that Simba and Haiba are a pair of sneaky little rats."

"That's a bit mean, isn't it?" Tojo said.

"Well, think about it," Tama said, staring him in the eyes. "Simba and Haiba are off having snuggly wuggly time—"

"'Snuggly wuggly' time?" said Tojo, stifling a laugh.

"Shut up," she snapped. "This is serious business. If Simba and Haiba are together, then that means one thing."

"Okay," Tojo said. "What?"

"*Devastation*!" she proclaimed, spreading out her forepaws. "Think about Nala. She'll be heartbroken! Literally! Her heart will shatter into a million tiny pieces, which Simba and Haiba will then proceed to eat, gorging on her sadness!"

Tojo's eyes were wide. "That's… disturbing."

"We've gotta do something, Tojo," Tama told him. "And fast – before this all turns into some sort of horrible catastrophe!"

"What do you suggest?" Tojo asked. "Should we confront them?"

"No," Tama said. "We have to tell Nala."

Tojo gasped. "*What*?"

"You heard me," Tama said. "We have to tell Nala. It's for her own good. If Simba's cheating on her with Haiba, then she has a right to know. It's the honest thing to do, isn't it?"

"Well… I guess," Tojo said, scratching his head. "But wouldn't that tear the trio apart for all eternity?"

"Yes," Tama admitted, "but they can't just go living for all of their lives. It's not right. We have to tell Nala. She deserves to know the truth."

"I suppose you're right, then," Tojo said. "Nala's going to need a lot of care and attention…"

"And we'll be there to provide it," Tama replied. "Now, we'd better get some sleep. We're in for a long day tomorrow…"

Tama headed off towards the vine hammock, leaving a distressed-looking Tojo.

"Oh, dear," Tojo muttered, sounding quite squeaky. "This isn't

going to end well…"

AN: No, no, no! This is bad! This is very, very bad! Tama is going to tell Nala! You may all cower in fear now. Things are going to get nasty. You can tell the story is coming to a close… The end is near, my friends. *Very* near.

AN: Well, it's my birthday today – but a writer never rests and his fangirls never stop squealing, so I felt like giving you an update. I left things on a pretty tense note last time, so it would be a crime for me not to continue. This chapter may alleviate some of your worries. Or not…

Coming Out

Chapter Thirteen: The Secret Is Out

Simba had the same nightmare again that night.

He was pretty much used to it by now, though. It wasn't that much of a big deal; after all, it was only a nightmare, right? It couldn't do any harm. Just a weird, disturbing scenario in his head… He would forget about it by the afternoon.

However, the nightmare was different again. Instead of Nala being torn to pieces, this time it was Haiba who was being mauled. Nala had the upper hand. She was tearing away at his flesh, slicing through his internal organs. She wouldn't stop laughing either. It was as if she finally had what she wanted…

Simba was hers.

The cub woke up in a cold sweat that morning, both confused and worried by the nightmare. It was as if the events of the nightmare depended on how he was feeling at the time. And right now, he was having doubts about his relationship with Haiba… Could it really work? Simba didn't really think so. Something was going to go wrong sooner or later… It had to.

Simba turned his head to the side, noticing that he had his

foreleg draped around Nala, hugging her close to him. He couldn't help but smile. It was very nice to hold her in this way… She deserved to be handled with care.

The cub then sighed, closing his eyes, confusion settling into his brain.

I can't take much more of this, he thought, feeling more than stressed out. *Do you love Nala or Haiba? I thought I made my mind up… but now I'm not so sure.*

Simba didn't want to move from his position; preferably, he would have liked to remain with Nala for ever. At least then it would be considered normal. Being with Haiba… It just felt too awkward. He loved him – he loved him more than anything – but it never really felt like it was going to work properly.

In his mind, a relationship was something that only truly worked when it was public. Everyone should be able to know about it and respect it. But with Haiba, that was just out of the question. It was two male cubs together. No pride in the world would ever agree to that! They would be exiled from the Pride Lands, their reputations tarnished for ever.

It's not right, Simba thought, shaking his head. It made him feel miserable to admit it. *It can't work…*

Nala's body shifted slightly. She was awake. "Simba?"

Simba quickly removed his foreleg, which was hugging her body. "Sorry, Nala," he said. "You okay?"

Nala rolled over to face him, staring into his eyes. She still looked beautiful. She always had done, since the day he first met her.

"You don't need to apologise," Nala said. "I liked it."

"Well, we can probably be intimate some other time," Simba said. "I don't want to disturb your sleep."

"I think I've slept for long enough," Nala told him.

That was true. She hadn't even woken up when Simba and Haiba snuck out of the Pride Lands so they could make out for a few hours… They thought that they would be caught for sure. It was a miracle that no one had seen them.

"I guess so," Simba shrugged. "Don't let me stop you, though."

He felt much calmer with Nala than he did with Haiba. It was very weird; he couldn't quite explain it. He felt so nervous and tense whenever Haiba was around… It was so hard to keep the secret. He was paranoid; it felt like everyone knew about their relationship already.

It only felt normal when it was just him and Nala. That was how things were supposed to be. That was the right way. A male and a female. Nothing was simpler. But a male and a male… It was one of the most complicated relationships of all. To him, at least.

"I like being with you," Nala told him, smiling. "I feel a lot safer. Even when some maniac has his claws around my throat. If you're there, it's… okay."

Simba was slightly taken aback by this confession. "Wow," he said. "That's… pretty good."

Nala raised her eyebrows. "I love you, Simba," she said. "That's kind of how it works."

"I love you, too, Nala," the cub mumbled, and it was the first time that he actually meant it in a long while.

Simba felt a mixture of both happiness and dread, deep down in the pit of his stomach.

Ugh… He began to feel sick. *Things are getting worse…*

Now only one question remained.

Would things ever get better?

"Tama, I'm really not sure about this," Tojo said as he trundled

along the flatlands. Tama was storming ahead of him, looking very determined. She was on a mission, and it didn't look as though anything would stop her. "I think we should talk about it first."

"We've discussed it, Tojo," Tama said, not even bothering to look at him. "This is the right thing to do."

"But it could tear the whole kingdom apart!" Tojo argued. "I know it's bad that Simba and Haiba are keeping their relationship a secret. I get it. But… it could cause so much trouble. Do we really want to be blamed for that?"

"I've hurt animals in the past," Tama said. "Including Nala. I don't want her to get hurt again. Imagine if she had to find that out for herself… It would crush her. We need to break it to her gently."

"What if it crushes her all the same?" Tojo asked.

Tama then stopped. She turned around to face Tojo, her face showing no signs of remorse.

"It's better this way," she said. "Trust me."

And she began walking away again.

"I do trust you," Tojo said, trailing behind her. "I just don't trust *them*…"

"Do you want a surprise?" Simba asked, smiling at Nala.

She giggled, smiling back. "A surprise?" she said. "What kind of surprise?"

"I'm not gonna tell you," he said. "That's the whole point."

"Really?" Nala asked. "Well, you'd better get it quickly, then. I'm not going to wait around here for ever."

"I'll be right back," Simba said, climbing to his paws and walking out of the den. "You're gonna love it!"

Simba frowned as he left the den. He'd used that as an excuse so that Nala wouldn't follow him out. He'd just find a pretty flower or something to give to her later. That would be good enough. She'd like it.

Right now, he needed to talk to Haiba. Confess to the truth. It was killing him on the inside. Things were becoming too much for him to handle. It would only be a matter of time before he snapped and admitted to everything…

Honesty was the best policy.

At least, that's what he thought.

Nala sat in the den, waiting for Simba to return.

I wonder what that surprise is? she thought, curious. *He hasn't done something like this in a while. Not that I'm complaining, of course.*

She liked the fact that Simba was showing more care and attention towards her now. In recent times, their relationship seemed a little rocky… It was as if he were neglecting her. Though for what reason, she couldn't possibly imagine.

"Maybe things will get better…" she whispered hopefully.

"Nala."

Nala's head shot up as she saw Tama and Tojo walking into the den.

"Tama? Tojo?" She stared at them in confusion. "What are you doing here?"

"Nala, I—"

"Tama, are you sure about this?" Tojo interrupted. He looked worried. "Perhaps you should—"

"I know what I'm doing, Tojo," she snapped, before turning to Nala. "Nala, we have something to tell you."

"Like what?" Nala asked in bemusement.

"Something about Simba."

AN: Heh-heh-heh… Yet another dirty little cliffhanger. Well, it's a pretty huge one, actually. I think you all know what's going to happen now… I suggest that you prepare yourself for a heart attack. Only two more chapters to go now. See you next time!

AN: We've arrived at the penultimate chapter. I think it's pretty obvious what's going to happen next. Poor Nala…

Coming Out

Chapter Fourteen: Left Out

Nala stared at Tama, unsure of what this conversation entailed.

"What about Simba?" she asked. A look of worry crossed her face. "What's wrong with him?"

"I think we'd better sit down," Tama said, wrapping a paw gently around Nala's shoulder. The two cubs sat down on the ground. "Nala… I'm afraid that Simba has been lying to you."

"Lying to me?" said Nala. "He wouldn't do that. What the heck are you talking about?"

"I don't know how long he's been doing it for," Tama said in a very tender tone; she was trying to approach the subject in a graceful manner. "But… when me and Tojo were in the jungle last night, we found Simba with…"

Nala froze, terrified. She knew exactly what Tama was going to say.

Simba was with another girl.

Of course. It all made sense now. No wonder he seemed so distant towards her… He was having an affair with some other lioness!

Nala tensed up with anger. How could he? She thought that they had something special together… That obviously wasn't the case, though. He didn't love her. He'd been off smooching with another lioness cub for days now.

"He's with another lioness?" Nala asked, staring into Tama's eyes. She knew the truth now. It was only a matter of time before Tama told her—

"No," Tama said, much to Nala's surprise.

"What?" she said in disbelief. "What do you mean, then?"

"We caught Simba… kissing with Haiba," Tama confessed.

At that moment, Nala's world was turned upside down.

Simba… and Haiba? No. That just didn't register with her brain. It wasn't possible. It couldn't ever happen. Tama was obviously playing some kind of sick joke on her. That's all this was. Two males – especially ones like Simba and Haiba – couldn't ever be together…

"No," Nala said, shaking her head. "You're lying."

"Nala… every word of this is the truth," Tama told her. "Simba and Haiba were kissing in the jungle. They're obviously trying to be together behind your back."

Nala looked up at Tojo. He nodded in confirmation.

"Tama's right," Tojo said. "It's true. They were… kissing."

"Are you sure you saw it right?" Nala asked, trying to think of any logical reason – aside from romance – why this might have happened. "Maybe… maybe you didn't see everything. M-m-maybe Haiba f-forced himself on Simba or something. I know what Haiba's like… He's probably just some stupid little… little…"

Tama's gaze showed nothing but the truth. "I'm sorry, Nala."

Nala buried her head in Tama's shoulder, and began to cry.

Tama stroked her back softly, trying to comfort her in any way possible.

For Nala, it felt like everything in her life had been ripped apart. She felt her heart physically snapping in two. It was an awful feeling. The worst she had ever experienced. Worse than almost being drowned by the Royal Reaper, or tortured by her own father… The feeling of losing someone you loved was the worst possible feeling of all. She was sure of that.

Simba hadn't died. But their love for each other had.

"No… no… no…" Nala's sobs echoed through the den.

"It's okay, Nala," Tama said, patting her on the back. "It's okay."

"No, it's not," she snapped. "I loved him…" Tears streamed thick and fast down her cheeks. "I loved him!"

"I know," Tama said.

She said the next thing in a whisper.

"But I don't think he loved you…"

"I love Nala."

Haiba stared up at Simba in shock. "*What*?"

Simba and Haiba were stood beside the waterhole. Haiba, as usual, was resting by the tree where Simba and Nala had first crossed paths. It felt as though he was trying to become a replacement for her… He kept hanging around the same locations as they did.

"You heard me," Simba said. "I love Nala."

Haiba looked as though he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Are you kidding me?" he asked. "Are you okay, Simba? Did you bump your head? Did you sniff some Sumu plants or something? You are thinking straight, right?"

"Yes," Simba confirmed. "Haiba, this is too much for me to handle."

"I thought you loved me," Haiba said, rising to his paws. He stared hard into the cub's auburn eyes. "I'm struggling to understand this, Simba. I thought we had something special together."

"I *do* love you, Haiba," Simba said. He shook his head. "But it's a different kind of love. I may feel it in my heart… but I don't feel it in my soul."

"I'm not getting any of this," Haiba said, clearly looking distressed. "You said that you loved me! I heard you!"

"I love the both of you," Simba said through gritted teeth, frustrated. "But when it comes down to you or Nala, then Nala wins. *Every time*."

"Why?" That was the only question Haiba could ask.

"I think it's just lust with you, Haiba," Simba admitted. "I wanted something new. Something exciting. I thought Nala was getting too boring for me… but she's not. I was wrong. I was stupid. I was just trying to perk things up by being with you. Nala makes me happy. But you… I just feel like it's too stressful. It can't work out."

"But I honestly love you," Haiba said, sounding desperate. "With all of my heart. Without you… I don't know what I'll do. I'll die, Simba! Nothing feels the same anymore. I don't want to flirt with anyone or anything. I just want *you*."

He hugged Simba tightly, nuzzling him on the side of his head. "Haiba, I can't—"

"Please," Haiba begged, tears drizzling down his face. "I don't want to lose you, Simba… You're the only thing that matters to me now. Please don't leave me…"

Simba pulled away from him. "I've made my mind up, Haiba,"

he said. "I'm grateful for everything that's happened between us, Haiba. I'm happy about it. But… it has to stop now. It'll tear all of us apart if it continues. You have to understand that."

"What am I supposed to do?" Haiba asked. "Because if I can't be with you, then there's nothing left for me. I might as well slit my throat right now."

"Haiba… we can still be friends," Simba said. "You don't have to —"

"I don't want to be friends," Haiba snapped. "I want to be your mate."

"But I'm Nala's mate!" Simba yelled. He was getting angry now. "I can't just abandon her, Haiba! This is tearing me apart on the inside! I care for her more than anything! I've looked after her ever since we first met, and that's not going to stop now! I have no other choice."

"But… but…" Haiba was speechless.

"I'm sorry, Haiba," Simba said. He gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. "I'm sorry."

With that, Simba turned around and walked away, heading for Pride Rock.

I have to tell Nala the truth, he decided. *I'll tell her everything… She deserves to know.*

Haiba sank to his knees, watching as Simba disappeared into the distance. He sobbed, unable to stop the mass of tears from flooding down his cheeks.

He had lost the only animal he ever truly loved. There was no hope of them having a relationship now… Simba had his heart set on being with Nala. That was what was normal, after all. No one would bat an eyelid at that…

I've lost everything, he thought, heartbroken. *Everything…*

Haiba collapsed onto his stomach. It felt like Simba had torn his heart from his chest. As if it was nothing to him.

What am I going to do now? he wondered. *What am I going to do?*

"*Haiba!*"

Haiba looked up at the sound of the livid voice.

What?

Nala was storming towards him, her eyes red from a long session of crying. Tama and Tojo were trailing behind her, looking very worried indeed.

"*Haiba!*" she screamed. Haiba noticed that her claws were extended. "*I have a bone to pick with you!*"

AN: One final cliffhanger. I couldn't resist. So, Nala knows the truth – and now she's out for blood! She doesn't know that Simba has broken it off with Haiba, though… Oh, God! This is so tense right now! However, this will all culminate in the final chapter. Don't miss it! It's bound to be one emotional climax!

AN: It's time for the exciting conclusion to *Coming Out*! This has been quite the story for me to write, and I hope that you'll be satisfied with the ending. Enjoy!

Coming Out

Chapter Fifteen: Coming In

Haiba didn't even have time to run away as Nala stomped over to him. There was a fire in her eyes; he had never seen her so angry before. It was frightening, to say the least. He felt as though she could kill him at any moment, and he wouldn't stand a chance.

"Wh-what is it, Nala?" Haiba stammered, although he had an idea about why she was here…

"I know what you've been doing!" Nala yelled, shoving Haiba hard in the chest and knocking him onto his back. "Don't try to deny it!"

Haiba scrambled away from Nala, staring up at her in fear. He didn't dare to say anything. There was no telling what she could do…

"N-Nala… I—"

"Why did you do it?" Nala was baring her sharp teeth at Haiba, growling loudly. "Why did you steal Simba from me?"

"Nala, y-you don't understand," Haiba mumbled, trying to defend himself. "It just sort of happened… We didn't expect—"

"Stop lying!" Nala snapped. "How long have you been doing this for? Months, I bet. Probably not long after you showed your stupid monkey face in the Pride Lands!"

"'*Monkey face*'?"

Nala slapped him across the face.

"Sorry," Haiba said, rubbing his cheek.

"How could you?" Nala asked. Haiba could see in her eyes that she was heartbroken. "I loved Simba! More than anything! And I didn't just feel it in my heart – I felt it in my soul! But obviously Simba didn't…"

"Nala…" Haiba hung his head low, finally doing what he thought was right. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry isn't good enough!" Nala roared. "You've taken everything from me! I feel like I don't even have a heart anymore! It just feels empty! You have no idea how this feels!"

A few tears leaked from Haiba's eyes, thinking of how Simba had broken up with him. "I think I do…"

"*You've ruined everything!*" Nala screamed. "*And I'll make sure that Simba never goes near you ever again!*"

Nala raised her claws, ready to deliver the killing blow.

Haiba shut his eyes tightly. He knew what was going to happen now, and he couldn't stop it.

He awaited his fate…

Waited…

Waited…

Waited…

Only, the killing blow never made its mark.

Haiba slowly opened his eyes, and was greeted by the sight of Nala burying her face in the ground, crying her eyes out.

"I can't do it…" she gasped, heaving with sobs. "I can't do it…"

Doing what he thought was the right thing, Haiba stood up and walked over to Nala, cradling her gently in his paws.

"Nala…" Haiba said. "I'm sorry."

"No…" Nala stared up at him with bloodshot eyes. "*I'm* sorry."

"What?"

"I can't stop it," she admitted, looking ashamed to do so. "Even if I hurt you – *killed* you – then Simba would never be with me. He would always love you. No matter what. I'm just… I'm not as good as you."

"Then what are you saying?" Haiba asked.

"You should be with him," Nala said. "Because I know now…" She sniffled, wiping a tear from her eye.

"He liked me… but he *loved* you."

Haiba raised his eyebrows in shock. Nala loved Simba that much that she would give herself up so he could be with someone else. Someone like him.

And Haiba realised in that moment that Simba and Nala were truly meant for each other.

It made sense to him now that they had a connection which he and Simba could never have. They may have thought that their relationship only went as far as kissing and snuggling – but Simba and Nala had far more than that.

They had honest love. A desire to care for each other. No matter what Haiba thought of Simba, Nala would always be his mate. He couldn't ever change that.

"No," Haiba said, looking upwards. "He *did* love you, Nala. And he can tell you that himself."

"Nala?"

Nala lifted her head to see Simba stood a few feet away. Tama and Tojo were hiding behind the tree, uneasy expressions on their faces. They clearly didn't want to be a part of this…

"Simba?"

Haiba let go of Nala, allowing her to run over to Simba. She stared into his auburn eyes, unsure of what to do or say.

"Nala…" Simba swallowed hard, clearing his throat. "I have something to tell you."

"I know, Simba," she revealed, much to his dejection. "I know all about what… happened between you and Haiba."

Simba was staring into her eyes, too—

—and then he broke down in tears.

"I'm sorry," he sobbed. "I tried to tell you – I really wanted to – but I just couldn't. It was eating away at me on the inside. I couldn't take it; it was like my soul was being ripped apart. I know that I've failed you, Nala… and I'm sorry. I'm so, so… sorry."

Nala took a deep breath, looking down on the upset Simba. "It's

okay, Simba," she told him. "I forgive you."

Simba looked up at her. "What?"

"I understand now," Nala said. "I love you with all of my heart, Simba. That won't ever change. No one could ever replace you. But… I know what's right. I know who you should be with. You should be—"

"With Nala," Haiba said, standing between them. Simba and Nala stared at him in confusion.

"Haiba," Nala began. "I—"

"I know the truth," Haiba said, smiling at them both. "And the truth is that you two are meant for each other. I can't get in the way of that. The love that you two have for each other is unlike any I've ever seen before. I couldn't provide even half of the care that Nala would if I were with you, Simba. You're meant for her, and she's meant for you. You're soul mates."

Simba and Nala gazed into each other's eyes.

"I really do love you," Simba confessed. "I was going to tell you that… before—"

"It doesn't matter, Simba," Nala said. "I love you, too."

"I want us to be together," Simba told her. "For good this time. But I don't know about Haiba. He—"

"I'll always be your friend," Haiba said, giving the cub a wink.

"And so will we," Nala told Haiba. She looked at Simba. "Simba… do you really want this?"

Simba nodded. "More than anything. I feel it in my soul."

"So do I," Nala said. "Completely."

Haiba backed away from them, a grin on his face. "So why don't you give each other a big, slobbery kiss?"

And Simba and Nala did just that.

Haiba smiled, happy for them, as he watched the two cubs kissing. *Now that's true love,* he thought, pleased. *It's something you can't stop.*

Simba and Nala pulled away from the kiss, beaming at each other.

"I promise not to do this to you again, Nala," Simba said, hugging her tightly. "I won't fail you a second time."

"I know you won't, Simba," she said, nuzzling the side of his face. "I know you won't."

And, in that moment, Simba felt like he loved Nala more than he ever had before.

Simba nuzzled Nala as they sat beside the waterhole, relaxing by the tree where they had met. It felt like a very long time ago now. They had been through so much together ever since, and it had only managed to strengthen their bond as a result.

"You okay?" Simba asked, stroking the top of Nala's head.

"Yeah," Nala said, snuggling up to him. "Never better."

The two cubs couldn't deny that recent events had changed them, of course. Although, in a way, it had brought them closer together. It made them realise that nothing could ever tear them apart. They would always love each other. For ever.

"Hey, guys!"

Simba and Nala turned their heads to see Haiba surfacing from the water. He grinned at them in his usual cheesy way. "You guys coming in? The water's great."

It was as if nothing had even happened.

And that was the way they liked it.

Haiba couldn't deny that he still loved Simba – but he loved him enough to let him go. He deserved to be with Nala. They were

true soul mates. He and Simba could never be. Regardless of that, he would always be their friend. He would die for them both.

Simba and Nala glanced at each other.

"I could use a swim," Nala said, smiling.

"It's so hot, it's cool," Haiba quipped with a sly look in his eyes.

"I'm sure it is," Simba agreed.

Simba and Nala jumped into the waterhole, splashing Haiba in the face. He laughed happily, splashing them back as they began to have a water fight.

Simba, Nala and Haiba were friends once more.

And that was just the way they liked it.

The End

AN: And there you have it. Simba and Nala are together once more, and their friendship with Haiba is still as strong as ever. All is well. Yay!

I've really enjoyed writing this story, as it's been something completely different from what I'm used to. It's been a fascinating, exciting experience for me. I always seem to come up with something unique – and this certainly qualifies! It's been absolutely lovely to write.

Anyway, I'd love to hear your final thoughts on this story. You're great readers – you always give a good verdict at the end. Maybe you liked the ending, maybe you hated it – I don't know. Just tell me! Now! Or don't.

Thanks for reading the story. You may now smooch with Haiba.

Take care,

—ThatPersonYouMightKnow